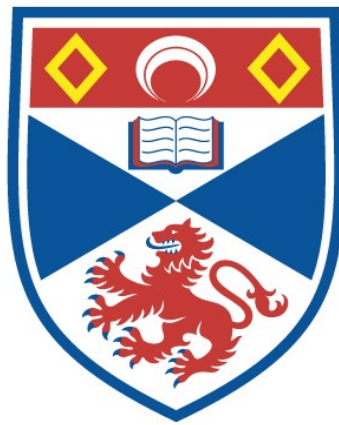


**ASPECTS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF  
PENANCE IN SELECTED MIDDLE ENGLISH  
TEXTS : IMAGE AND EXEMPLUM**

Karl Gilbert Wilcox

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil  
at the  
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ASPECTS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF PENANCE IN SELECTED MIDDLE ENGLISH

TEXTS: IMAGE AND *EXEMPLUM*

by

Karl Gilbert Wilcox

Submitted in application for the degree of Master of  
Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews

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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
MY FATHER  
MARVIN ROBERT WILCOX M.D.  
(1934-1976)

### Dissertation Abstract

In this dissertation Middle English figural and narrative representations of penance are assessed for their rhetorical function in the teaching of penance and their intended influence, as representational modes, upon lay understandings of penitential theory. Central to the argument is the view that the anatomized or schematic figural *res* functions in Middle English works of religious instruction as a paradigmatic memory image which both structures the text and works to "move" the reader's *affectus* towards a more pious disposition. Culturally and ideologically homologous with the *distinctio* and figural *res* (generally drawn from Scripture), the paradigmatic memory image performs a vital bridging role between the understanding of doctrine and its realization in practical terms. Furthermore, the use of such schematic imagery contributes towards the integration of penance with other elements of doctrine such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, *Pater noster*, and seven vices and virtues. The remedial role of penance as a dynamic mechanism to extirpate vice is made more explicit and efficacious by the sophistication and sensitivity to audience needs with which such integrated materials were compiled. The use of the *exemplum* i.e. exemplary narrative in the representation of penance is considered for its mnemonic utility in moving the *affectus*. However, unlike the schematic image, the use of the *exemplum* for the teaching of penance requires the addition of a didactic moralization to ensure that the audience does not misinterpret the narrative. A variety of methods for the employment of moralizations is identified, and their usefulness, in terms of doctrinal consistency and possible audience responses, is assessed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my supervisor Dr. Ian Johnson for his guidance, enthusiasm for all things medieval, and ready encouragement. For a term of supervision and frequent consultations on matters ranging from computer software to reading *Piers Plowman* I would like to thank George Jack. I would also like to thank Professor Ralph Hanna III for valuable discussion and comments on an early draft of materials. My thanks also go to Professor Michael Alexander for his initial interest in my research proposal and continued interest in my progress. I owe a good deal to Dr. John Haldane for a term of teaching on medieval scholasticism and in particular the thought of Thomas Aquinas. I would also like to thank my undergraduate history tutor, Dr. Harry Leonard, for his constant support and the conviction that this project would succeed. Dr. John Walton and his wife Jane have provided me with good fellowship, excellent meals, and a "second home" during my studies at St. Andrews. Finally, I am especially grateful to my mother, Marilyn Wilcox, for her readings of various drafts, financial support, and companionship as a fellow research student.

## Declarations

I, Karl Gilbert Wilcox, hereby certify that this thesis which is approximately 59,000 words in length has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

date 1/5/91 signature of candidate .....

I was admitted as a research student and as a candidate for the degree of M.Phil. (Mode A) in May 1988; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University between 1989 and 1991.

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## CHAPTER I

### General Introduction

Over thirty years ago the medieval historian, W.A. Pantin, in his book *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, took the unusual step of considering-- in addition to the social, political, and intellectual aspects of the medieval Church-- what he referred to as the "religious literature" of that period.<sup>1</sup> This literature, as Pantin explains, stemmed primarily from the "disciplinary legislation" of the Church, most notably the *omnis utriusque sexus* decree of the Lateran council of 1215 which made annual confession to a parish priest mandatory for all Christians.<sup>2</sup> As Leonard E. Boyle has observed, the 1215 council-- with its emphasis upon the reform of medieval society, or the "cure of souls" (*cura animarum*)-- "changed the face of pastoral care".<sup>3</sup> Central to this reforming concern was the dual role of the priest as both a public teacher and a private confessor; in the public sermon he was to instruct the would-be penitents in the essentials of the faith and the nature of sin; in the confessional he had the responsibility of ensuring that each penitent confessed all his sins, did so with true contrition, and then

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<sup>1</sup> W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191-192.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard E. Boyle, "The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology" in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, edited by Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville, Tenn. 1985), 30-43 (p. 31).

willingly accepted the penances or "works of satisfaction" assigned to him as both punishment and remedy against future sinning.

In order to facilitate the practice of this ambitious pastoral program, numerous so-called "penitential manuals" or *summae confessorum* were compiled in order to prepare the priests for the role of the confessor. The *summae confessorum*-- what L.E. Boyle has described as the "first wave" of penitential literature-- consist in the main of "academic works" such as Raymond of Pennaforte's vastly influential *summa*, a text which, in addition to providing the confessor with fundamental principles, also shows the sacrament of penance situated firmly within the larger contexts of moral theology, canon law, and contemporary social mores.<sup>4</sup>

However, in the wake of the Latin penitential manuals there came a "second wave" of derivative compilations, primarily in the vernaculars, which rather than focusing upon the education of the confessor, set out to teach the penitent not only how to confess, but also how to "use" the penitential process in such a way as to avoid future sinning and establish moral character. L.E. Boyle puts the emergence of the "second wave" at about 1260, citing a number of vernacular derivatives of "first wave" Latin manuals as evidence for this shift from "academic" penitential literature to the more ethical and public aims of the "second wave":

Where the second wave is most evident is in the production in the vernaculars of manuals of vices and virtues. Like

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

manuals of confession in general, the first such manuals of virtues and vices were in Latin and were meant for the education of the clergy, a prime example being the *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus* just before 1250 of the Dominican Guillaume Peraldus . . . But it was not long before versions of this *summa* and of similar manuals were made available in the various vernaculars and with the laity chiefly in mind: The Anglo-Norman *Manuel des peches* of William of Waddington, † ca. 1260; the *Lumiere as lais* of Peter of Peckham in 1267; the *Somme le roi* of Laurent of Orleans, the Dominican † confessor of Phillip III of France, in 1280; the *Miroir du † monde*, a derivative of the *Somme*, a year or two later; not to speak of the English *Handlyng Synne* and *Ayenbite of Inwit* [*The Book of Vices and Virtues*] at the turn of the century.<sup>5</sup>

In describing the "second wave" of vernacular compilations, Pantin identifies the "the correct use of the sacrament of penance" as the "underlying" or "dominating" theme of "most of the religious literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries".<sup>6</sup> However, in the thirty five years since this observation was made little critical attention has focused upon the ways in which penance was represented within the "second wave" compilations as compared with the presentation of penance in their "first wave" counterparts, the *summae confessorum*. In recent times the most notable contribution to this area of investigation has

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> W.A. Pantin, *The English Church*, p. 192.

been Nicholas J. Gray's extensive study of the penitential theory of the Latin manuals, which he then compares with Langland's *Piers Plowman* and other Middle English treatments of penance.<sup>7</sup> However, while N.J. Gray provides an invaluable account of penitential theory and its presence within *Piers*, his approach centers primarily upon theoretical and technical differences between the Latin "first wave" manuals and their derivative "second wave" counterparts. The comparison of theoretical or technical contents has, of course, considerable value as a "first step" towards a complete evaluation of the "first" and "second wave" interface. But in my view this approach must be supplemented with a consideration of the effects, upon the expression of penance, of the different literary forms or representational modes used in the "second wave" vernacular compilations.

In this vein Andrea Hopkins' study of Middle English "penitential romance" calls attention to the mediating influence of romance, as a literary form, upon the expression of penitential doctrine.<sup>8</sup> Central to her approach is the idea that while didactic penitential compilations, such as *Handlyng Synne*, were "medieval bestsellers", they taught penance in the "analytic mode"—that is, "they state the case, then use examples to support their arguments"; a medieval romance, however, "tells a story and manipulates its reader, more or less subtly, into learning its lesson."<sup>9</sup> The extent to which Hopkins recognizes the

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<sup>7</sup> Nicholas J. Gray, "A Study of *Piers Plowman* in Relation to the Medieval Penitential Tradition" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 1-31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

mediating power of literary forms in the teaching of penance is evident in her concluding remark that "the treatment of penance in the four romances [*Guy of Warwick*, *Sir Ysumbras*, *Sir Gowther*, and *Robert of Cisyle*] can be most fruitfully understood in relation to the nature of romance itself".<sup>10</sup>

The obvious differences between the literary form of a didactic work of religious instruction and a chivalric romance make it difficult, perhaps, to give credence to the notion that between the "first" and "second waves" of penitential literature there were significant changes in the "literary form" used to teach penance. Admittedly both "waves" of penitential texts were, by definition, didactic, but there is abundant evidence to suggest that with the "second wave", pedagogical aims shifted towards a more practical expression of penance, a change which warranted the appropriation of "rhetorical devices" such as figural imagery and *exempla* which, while still teaching penance didactically, would help ensure that the largely lay audience would be able to grasp and put into practice what they heard or read.

Vital to the teaching aim of the "second wave" of vernacular compilations was the integration of the sacrament of penance-- the subject central to the concerns of the *summae confessorum* of the "first wave"-- with the more ethical aims represented by the focus upon the "extirpation of vices and the fostering of virtues" in Peraldus' *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus* (itself a "first wave" Latin manual).<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p 198.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

role of the sacrament of penance as the spiritual "mechanism" whereby the vices could be displaced by their opposing virtues, ensured that the practical emphasis upon "becoming good" in the "second wave" compilations rested upon a clear understanding of the ethical or remedial function of penance as described in the "first wave" *summae confessorum*. However, in the "second wave" compilations this remedial function of penance was further integrated with the vices and virtues and, in turn, also placed within, and sometimes further integrated with, other elements of Christian belief such as the *Pater noster*, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the ten commandments.

Perhaps the most elaborate and successful example of this comprehensive integration-- and of the difference in literary form between the "first" and "second waves"-- is the *Somme le roi* or, in its Middle English translation, the *Book of Vices and Virtues*. True to the more ethical thrust of the "second wave" compilations, the *Somme* incorporates its discussion of penance within the larger structure of the vices and virtues. In addition, the compilation also treats the ten commandments, the beatitudes, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the *Pater noster*.<sup>12</sup> However, the most innovative aspect of the *Somme* is its use of figural imagery to show an organic, and thus implicitly causal, series of links between all of the doctrinal groups and elements which it treats. Although in terms of doctrinal content the *Somme* is indebted to Pennaforte's *Summa* and Peraldus' *Summa de vitiis et de*

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<sup>12</sup> W.A. Pantin, *The English Church*, pp. 193-194 describes Archbishop Peckham's legislation of 1281 (one year after the *Somme le roi* was compiled) that each parish was to be instructed four times per year in "the fourteen articles of the faith, the ten commandments of the Law and the two commandments of the Gospel, the seven works of mercy, the seven virtues, the seven vices, and the seven sacraments".



*Virtutibus*, its handling of these traditional, "first wave" materials shows, I believe, an attempt to make the ethical role of penance more explicit both in terms of its relationship with other doctrinal groups, and in terms of its "practice" as part of the penitent's spiritual life.<sup>13</sup>

Central to the expression of this ethical, "real life" aspect of the sacrament of penance, the figural *res*-- as a structuring schematic image or an extended metaphor-- serves as the indicator of a change in literary form between the "first" and "second wave" of pastoral, penitential literature. In addition to the appropriation of the figural *res* as a structuring schematic image, the "second wave" compilation or sermon also frequently relied upon the penitential *exemplum* or "illustrative short-narrative" as a demonstration of the didactic content of penance. Both the figural *res* and the *exemplum* are considered, in this dissertation, as "representations of penance" which-- although accountable in theoretical terms to the "first wave" *summae confessorum*-- are responsible in rhetorical terms to the needs and expectations of the lay audience.

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<sup>13</sup> Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (Michigan, 1952), pp. 125, 182.



## CHAPTER II

## General Penitential Theory with examples from Middle English texts

This Chapter, in addition to familiarizing the reader with the Latin penitential tradition of the later Middle Ages, also acts as a preliminary step towards the comparison of the Latin and vernacular expressions of that tradition. As noted in Chapter I, this comparison or relationship has been described primarily in terms of the similarities and differences between the theoretical content of the two groups of texts.<sup>14</sup> Such a comparison does not, however, take into account the use of structuring schematic imagery, extended metaphors and narrative; representational modes whose manifestations distinguish the vernacular treatments of penance from their Latin sources. The assumption that, in general, metaphorical treatments of penance merely "stand for" their didactic counterparts, and thus-- in order to be understood-- should be translated back into didactic prose, has obscured the role of the metaphor or image in medieval textuality as a mnemonic *imago* which, as it was memorized and meditated upon, integrated knowledge with virtuous action. This vital, dynamic linkage between "knowing" and "doing" suggests the metaphor or image as an "extender" of penitential doctrine, not only in terms of making it accessible to the layman, but also as a literary form which further amplified the role of

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<sup>14</sup> See Nicholas J. Gray, "A Study of *Piers Plowman* in Relation to the Medieval Penitential Tradition". I am heavily indebted to Gray's comprehensive description of the penitential theory of the Latin manuals and the *summae confessorum* of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

penance both within Christian doctrine as a whole and within the life of the penitent.

Thus, while the penitential theory of the Latin manuals provides an essential point of reference for all considerations of vernacular representations of penance, the literary forms or representational modes used in the vernacular texts are assessed with an eye to reader response as well as with a backward glance to their Latin sources. Although the penitential theory or doctrine which follows is based upon the Latin penitential manuals, I also attempt to provide illustrative examples from Middle English texts which, in part, anticipate the more detailed discussions of the vernacular representation of penance in Chapters IV and V.

**CONTRITION: "dolor pro peccatis assumptus"<sup>15</sup>**

Contrition, the first element in the penitential triad, was also the first step for the penitent towards the goal of forgiveness and absolution. Furthermore, contrition occupied a central position within penitential doctrine not only as the initial step towards forgiveness, but also as the internal state of "sorwe for synne" which must inform

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<sup>15</sup> Raymond of Pennafort, *Summa*, Lib. III, Tit. 34, 8 (Rome, 1603), p. 443 (cited by N.J. Gray p. 67).

both the acts of confession and the doing of penance (ie. satisfaction).<sup>16</sup>

The pervasive role of contrition within the sacrament of penance is attested to in the use of the term "Penitence" to refer both to contrition per se and the sacrament as a whole.<sup>17</sup> The importance of contrition, relative to confession and satisfaction, is evident in the penitential manuals where it is allowed that in exceptional circumstances contrition could suffice for both confession and satisfaction.<sup>18</sup> And by the same token, as Chaucer's Parson states, "litel<sup>e</sup> worth is shrifte (confession) or satisfaccioun without<sup>e</sup> contriti<sup>o</sup>n".<sup>19</sup>

The status of contrition as the principal factor in the forgiveness of sins is first formulated by Abelard in the early twelfth-century. Abelard held that contrition brought about immediate forgiveness from

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<sup>16</sup> N.J. Gray cites "sorwe" as the most "common synonym for contrition in the vernacular English penitential tradition" (p. 67, note 6).

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales: The Riverside Chaucer*, general editor Larry D. Benson (Oxford, 1989), *The Parson's Tale*, p. 289: 132. See also N.J. Gray, p. 66 who cites two instances where penitential writers use the Latin term "poenitentia" as a synonym for contrition: "Poenitentia aliquando cordis contritio dicitur" (Alain de Lille's *Liber Poenitentialis*, Lib. III, cap. iv). "cum dicitur: iste multum penitet de peccatis suis, sensus est: iste multum dolet et conteritur de peccatis suis" (Thomas of Chobham's *Summa Confessorum*, Art. I, questio i). See also *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, edited by William Smith and Samuel Cheetham, vol. II (London, 1880), pp. 1586-1587, where under the heading "Penitence" the original meaning of the term is given as "repentance . . . implying change of heart, contrition and amendment".

<sup>18</sup> See N.J. Gray, p. 80.

<sup>19</sup> *The Riverside Chaucer*, general editor Larry D. Benson (Oxford, 1989), p. 296: 309-310.

the eternal weight of sin (eternal damnation) and left only a temporal punishment which must be "paid" by the penitent through works of satisfaction. This view was opposed by Hugh of St. Victor who maintained that after contrition the eternal weight of sin remained until the priest actually pronounced absolution. In the late thirteenth century Gratian, in his *Decretum*, considered both views as part of a projected synthesis of penitential theories, but failed either to reconcile Abelard with Hugh or decide between them. However, Abelard's "contritionist" position gained predominance with Peter Lombard who, in his *Sentences*, advocated sorrow for sin as the crucial act of will (*dolor voluntarie assumptus*) preparatory to the remission of sins.<sup>20</sup>

It is important to emphasize here that Abelard's contritionist position had a considerable impact on late-medieval conceptions of the doctrine of penance. This influence becomes more apparent when Abelard's contritionism is viewed in conjunction with his soteriology (theory of the atonement) which, like his contritionism, stressed the subjective role of the sinner over the objective and forensic work of Christ on the cross-- the soteriological view held by Anselm.<sup>21</sup> The issue between Abelard and Anselm hinged upon the definition of man's role in his own salvation. Abelard's soteriology, with its emphasis

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<sup>20</sup> On contrition as an act of the "will" see N.J. Gray p. 70. For a general discussion of the "will" see John M. Bowers, *The Crisis of Will in Piers Plowman* (Washington D.C., 1986), pp. 41-60. On the Abelardian notion of "contritionism" see Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, 1977), p. 19 and N.J. Gray pp. 82-83.

<sup>21</sup> G.H. Gerrits, *Inter Timorem et Spem: A Study of the Theological Thought of Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen (1367-1398)* (Leiden, 1986), pp. 128-130.

upon the exemplary and didactic function of the cross, implied a more optimistic view of man's ability to effect, unaided by divine grace, true sorrow for sin. Anselm's rather pessimistic view of man's power to experience genuine contrition reflected, in turn, his soteriological emphasis upon the cross as an act of vicarious satisfaction for man's sin.

Contritionism, with its confidence in man's ability to respond *ex puris naturabilis* to the didactic and exemplary power of the cross, found its strongest voice within the late-medieval theological school of the *moderni*.<sup>22</sup> In keeping with their contritionism, the *moderni* echoed the recurring concern found in the penitential manuals over the dialogue between priest and penitent in the confessional.<sup>23</sup> According to the *moderni* the onus of achieving full contrition lay principally with the penitent, but the confessor found himself in the reciprocal position of having to ascertain if the penitent had achieved full contrition before pronouncing him absolved from sin. The resulting dilemma over whether the penitent or the confessor could be certain if

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<sup>22</sup> The ~~late~~ *moderni* of the later Middle Ages are conspicuous for their view that man may achieve full contrition without the aid of divine grace (G.H. Gerrits, *Inter Timorem et Spem*, p. 182). It is important to note the vital link between soteriology and theories of justification. The Abelardian soteriology, with its emphasis upon the exemplary and didactic function of the cross, logically extends to a concept of justification which prioritizes the free-will of the penitent over the divine grace of God at the moment of contrition. See Janet Coleman, *Piers Plowman and the Moderni* (Rome, 1981), pp. 31-35 for a discussion of *moderni* theology of justification.

<sup>23</sup> Although the penitential manuals are contritionist, and therefore reflect a subjective soteriology, they represent penitential doctrine in a more practical guise in keeping with the priorities of canon law and therefore do not discuss soteriology *per se*. However penance was an area of common concern for both canonists and theologians and it was discussed by both, with the theologians often stressing its more speculative aspects. See Stephen Courtenay, *Schools & Scholars in Fourteenth Century England* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 38-39, note 44.



contrition had been achieved, precluded the possibility of the penitent gaining the certainty that his sins had been forgiven.<sup>24</sup>

It was not until the early sixteenth century that the contritionist position was successfully challenged by Luther whose rejection of the soteriology of the *moderni* culminated in a radical re-evaluation of the role of the penitent in achieving true "sorwe for symme". As Alister McGrath states:

Luther had come to reject the presupposition upon which the soteriology of the *via moderna* was based. Whereas Luther initially understood *humilitas* to be man's response to the divine judgement passed against him, he now appears [1515] to hold that it is God, and God alone, who moves man to repentance . . .<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> E. Jane Douglass-Dempsey, *Justification in Late Medieval Preaching* (Leiden, 1966), p. 154. associates contritionism and the lack of assurance of salvation with late-medieval nominalism: "The constant recurring concern in Gerson, Biel and Geiler about scrupulousness (in the confessional) must certainly grow out of nominalist theology itself. For as we have seen a penitent can never be certain that he has met the requirement of full contrition, and thus he can never be sure that he is in a state of grace". The same point is made by G.H. Gerrits, *Inter Timorem et Spem*, p. 205: "The individual, however, can never be certain whether he will finally be saved. For he cannot be certain whether his contrition is sufficient for his justification . . ." See also *Ibid.*, p. 181, note, 107, p. 185.

<sup>25</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough*, second edition (Oxford, 1990), p. 128. A position similar to Luther's in regards to contrition was held by Zerboldt of Zutphen who wrote that man requires God's divine gift of grace in order to achieve full contrition and thus justification. See G.H. Gerrits, *Inter Timorem et Spem*, p. 182.

The uncertainty which followed quite logically from contritionism's emphasis upon the subjective role of the penitent, was incorporated within penitential doctrine and was to be promoted by the confessor in order to prevent the penitent from becoming presumptuous.<sup>26</sup> However, as we shall see frequently in the vernacular treatments of penance, although such uncertainty regarding the remission of sin would no doubt prove an obstacle to presumption, it could also promote an attitude of despair which, in effect, would be as dangerous for the penitent as would presumption. It was the awareness of this tension between presumption and despair (the product of contritionism) which often dictated the way in which penance was treated in late-medieval sermons, works of instruction, and *exempla*.

The task of the confessor in identifying true contrition and the uncertainty of the penitent as to personal forgiveness, was alleviated by the instruction in the penitential manuals that true interior contrition could be identified by the exterior signs of tears, sighs, and cries for mercy.<sup>27</sup> Both Langland and Robert Mannyng provide examples of these exterior signs as indicators of complex psychological attitudes towards personal sin.

For example, in Passus V of *Piers Plowman* Langland's personification of the sin of Sloth confesses his sins, but fails to provide evidence, through tears and cries for mercy, that he is truly contrite. This evident lack of true repentance results finally in a

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<sup>26</sup> See G.H. Gerrits, *Inter Timorem et Spem*, p. 205.

<sup>27</sup> See N.J. Gray, pp. 68-69. T.N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession*, pp. 238-245.

fainting spell and an abrupt wakening of Sloth at the hands of Vigilante who cunningly hints at the need for tears by throwing a bucketfull of water "at his eighen" with the warning that "Wanhope wolde thee bitraye" unless Sloth becomes truly sorry for his sins:

"Repentede stow the noght?" quod Repentaunce-- and right with  
that he swowned<sup>28</sup>

Til *Vigilate* the veille fette water at his eighen  
And flatte it on his face and faste on hym cryde  
And seide, "Ware thee-- for Wanhope wolde thee bitraye.  
"I am sory for my synnes" seye to thiselwe,  
And beet thiself on the brest, and bidde Hym of grace,  
For is no gilt here so gret that his goodnesse nys moore (V:  
442-448).<sup>28</sup>

Robert Mannyng, in his late fourteenth-century instructional text *Handlyng Synne* (based upon the French work *Manuel des Pechiez*) manages to compact a considerable amount of doctrine concerning the nature of Judas' sorrow for his betrayal of Christ into about twenty lines of rhyming couplets.<sup>29</sup> Mannyng makes it clear that although Judas had "gret sorowe and contrycyun", his sorrow (and indeed tears) were mixed with unbelief so that he despaired of mercy and hung himself. Mannyng explains Judas' suicide by pointing to the fundamental error in Judas' "shryfte" (confession):

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<sup>28</sup> William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-Text*, edited by A.V.C. Schmidt (London, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> Robert Mannyng of Brunne: *Handlyng Synne*, edited by Idelle Sullens (Binghamton, N.Y., 1983).



He shroue hym wy~~p~~ gret repentaunce

But of goddes mercy he had noun affyaunce (p. 306: 12329-30).

The moralization of this negative *exemplum*, according to Mannyng, is that we should maintain our hope of forgiveness during contrition and in addition to tears and sighs not forget to cry out for mercy:

*P*ys shul~~3~~e byleue wy~~p~~oute nay,

*P*at god wyl for~~s~~yue and may (pp. 306-307: 12335-36).

Mannyng's parting comment on Judas's contrition makes a clear distinction between sorrow for sin and mere sorrow for the effects of sin:

Hys wanhope toke he more to gref

*P*an hys takyng as a~~p~~ref (p. 307: 12341-42).

This qualitative assessment of Judas' faulted contrition and wanhope points to hatred of sin and love of God as the preferred motivations for contrition.<sup>30</sup>

An example of full contrition, as evidenced by the three external signs, is provided by Haukyn at the conclusion to Passus XIV of *Piers*. Following Conscience's presentation of contrition, confession,

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<sup>30</sup> The term "attrition", used initially by Alain de Lille to refer to imperfect repentance, was used by the *moderni* such as William of Ockham to mean repentance which was motivated solely by fear rather than by love as is the case with true contrition. See G.H. Gerrits, *Inter Timorem et Spem*, p. 181, note, 107. See also T.N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession*, pp. 250-273.

satisfaction, and the sermon on poverty (reminiscent of Piers' insights following his tearing of the pardon) Haukyn breaks down and shows himself to be truly contrite:

"So hard it is", quod Haukyn, "to lyve and to do synne.  
Synne seweth us evere", quod he, and sory gan wexe,  
And wepte water with hise eighen and weyled the tyme  
That evere he dide dede that deere God displesed--  
Swouned and sobbed and siked ful ofte . . .  
and cride mercy faste (XIV: 322-331).<sup>31</sup>

Although Langland presents Haukyn at the conclusion of Passus XIV as an exemplary penitent who should receive absolution, it is significant that the dream breaks off before we are told for certain that Haukyn was absolved of his sins or, indeed, if he was ultimately saved. This lack of a conclusive ending regarding Haukyn's salvation is remarkable when considered both within the general context of penitential manuals and especially within the context of penitential narratives (*exempla*) where the protagonist is nearly always shown, as a result of his extreme contrition, to be either saved or damned at the moment of absolution-- a moment which typically also coincides both with the protagonist's death and the end of the story.

As I shall discuss in Chapter V, Langland is conspicuous for his refusal to provide conclusive endings to his penitential narratives.

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<sup>31</sup> Piers, in a similar vein, abandons the "active life" of ploughing in Passus VII with the words "I shal cessen of my sowyng . . . and swynke noght so harde,/ Ne aboute my bely joye so bisy be na moore" *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, edited by A.V.C. Schmidt (London, 1987), Passus VII: 118-119.

But within the immediate contritionist context Haukyn's open-ended fate may be seen as supporting Greta Hort's view that Langland had sympathy for the more extreme contritionist position, as advocated by Ockham, that there could be no assurance of the remission of sins until the moment of death and divine judgement.<sup>32</sup>

In response to Hort's claim, N.J. Gray argues that it is not necessary to connect Langland with the speculative theology of Ockham since the "pastoral penitential tradition" from which, as Gray sees it, Langland drew exclusively for his penitential material, was itself decidedly contritionist.<sup>33</sup> However, I would argue that there are important differences between the contritionism of the penitential manuals and the contritionism of the *moderni*. From a purely theological point of view Langland's omission of absolution in the case not only of Haukyn, but also of the thief Roberd the Robbere in Passus V, possibly reflects the views of the *moderni* who, to a greater degree than the Latin penitential manual compilers, stressed the uncertainty of salvation.

Although Langland most likely did draw extensively from the tradition of the Latin penitential manuals these sources alone do not account for his omission of absolution in cases where it is merited. The Latin manuals adopted a "theory of practice" approach to the sacrament (exemplified by the use of the three exterior signs of contrition) which discussed contrition in terms of its operation within

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<sup>32</sup> Greta Hort, *Piers Plowman and Contemporary Religious Thought* (London, 1938), pp. 140-41, 154. On the uncertainty of the *moderni* in regards to the remission of sin see above, p. 13, note 24.

<sup>33</sup> N.J. Gray, p. 83.

the confessional. The practical constraints of the confessional demanded that, given the exterior signs of tears, sighs, cries for mercy, and the intention to do penance, the priest should pronounce absolution. It could be argued that if Langland had not been influenced by the extreme contritionism of the *moderni* he would not have hesitated to represent penitents such as Roberd the Robbere and Haukyn, who demonstrate the exterior signs of true contrition, as being forgiven and absolved.

N.J. Gray admits that there is a "low emphasis placed on absolution" in *Piers Plowman*, but he interprets this as evidence of further reliance upon the penitential manuals which accorded priestly absolution what he refers to as a "merely declaratory" function-- the priest "merely shows" what contrition has already accomplished, namely forgiveness of sins. However this rationale for Langland's avoidance of "absolution scenes" side-steps the fact that although formal absolution was not itself efficacious for the remission of sin, it was the primary basis upon which the Church could claim authority over the administration of the process of repentance.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, from the penitent's point of view the indicative statement *ego absolvo te* was the only assurance he would have that his contrition had been efficacious.

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<sup>34</sup> Wendy Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge, 1989) pp. 45-46, observes that the vernacular "Pastoral manuals" originally intended to instruct the priests became available to the laity with the result that "conscience might be prepared, and contrition awakened, in anyone who could read English." Scase claims that the "implications" of this shift in readership are "confronted and exploited in *Piers Plowman*" with the result that "although [in the poem] the powers of the confessor are diminished, the sacrament of penance retains the greatest importance". This view diverges considerably from Gray's insistence upon Langland's penitential orthodoxy, but provides further support for the view that Langland was sympathetic towards the contritionist views, as held by Ockham, and sceptical of the power of priestly absolution.

Finally, N.J. Gray's view that absolution was a mere formality fails to take into account that the declaration of the remission of sins had an important indicative function within the Latin manuals themselves. The formula *ego absolvo te* is set out in the manuals as the authoritative and necessary response to a penitent's display of the exterior signs, his statement of resolve to make satisfaction, and his willingness to make restitution.<sup>35</sup>

It is more plausible, I think, if we are to attach a label to Langland's penitential theology, to recognize the distinction between the contritionism of the penitential manuals and that of the *moderni* such as Ockham and Biel, and to suggest that Langland's avoidance of sacramental absolution reflects the more extreme contritionism of the latter school.

However, Langland gives no explicit evidence of advocating the contritionist stance of the *moderni* and it would be an oversimplification to attempt to explain his omission of sacramental absolution solely in terms of possible theological allegiances. Another, perhaps more immediate, area of investigation opens when Langland's and others' handling of penance is viewed in terms of its intended rhetorical effect upon the reading or listening audience. In other words, Langland's omission of absolution, while not ostensibly in keeping with the penitential manuals, may have succeeded in conveying

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<sup>35</sup> Raymond of Pennafort, *Summa Sancti Raymundi de Peniafort Barcinonensis, Ord. Praedicator, De Poenitentia et Matrimonio, cum glossis Ioannis de Friburgo* (Rome, 1603, reprinted Farnborough, 1967) pp. 404-405 (cited by N.J. Gray, pp. 255-256) writing about the absolution of excommunicates condemns the practice of using a deprecatory form of absolution of the type used in the general mass since this form was neither efficacious nor sacramental.

the penitential spirit better than if Langland had dutifully included sacramental absolution. The reasons for this, discussed in detail in Chapters IV and V, center upon an awareness that the teaching of penance, in addition to providing doctrinal information, must also take into consideration the status of the audience (learned or unlearned, presumptuous or despairing), and seek to employ literary forms which would cater to needs specific to the type of audience for which the teaching is intended. The representation of penance must not only create an opportunity for the listener or reader to learn doctrine, it must also affect him in such a way that he will become a penitent himself.

Thus it could be argued that Langland consistently avoids sacramental absolution in order to allow the uncertain outcome of the protagonist's penitential experience to remind the ~~penitent~~<sup>would-be</sup> penitent of his own salvific uncertainty. Langland is concerned then not only with knowledge (his allegory or *exempla* do not merely "stand for" equivalent doctrine), but with presenting that knowledge in a way which-- because of its literary form-- will lead to doctrinally correct action on the part of the audience.

From the point of view of the present-day critic, Langland's omission of sacramental absolution can be accounted for either by appealing to fourteenth-century theological influences or by recognizing the rhetorical and affective aspect of medieval textuality which required a writer to adopt a mode of representation suitable to his pedagogical task and his intended audience. Obviously both critical approaches are valid in the assessment of Middle English religious



texts. Langland, Robert Mannyng, sermon writers and others, present doctrine which the critic must attempt to place within a general theological context. However, when doctrine is represented through the media of figural imagery or narrative it is often the case that a broader and more emotive range of reader response ensues than that called for in the reading of doctrine as didactic prose.

Langland's omission of sacramental absolution is but one instance where it can be said that the choice of how to represent penance was largely dictated by the desire to guide reader response through rhetorical means. As we shall see in Chapters IV and V, the representation of penance in general through figural imagery, metaphors, or narrative must be assessed with an eye to reader response. Within such an approach particular images or narrative sequences are analyzed not only as reflections of theological positions, but also as evidence of attempts, on the part of the compiler, to ensure that readers would interpret and apply that doctrine correctly.

#### Confession: "peccatorum ore confessio"<sup>36</sup>

The second element in the penitential process was the act of making confession of sins before a priest. Invariably the emphasis upon contrition as the basis for the remission of sins led to doubts as to the importance of confession. As early as the tenth-century Aelfric

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<sup>36</sup> Alain de Lille, *Liber Poenitentialis*, edited by Jean Longere, vol. II (Louvain and Lille, 1965) Lib. IV, cap. v. (cited by N.J. Gray, p. 87).

gives evidence in his homilies of a Frankish controversy over the need for confession. Although Aelfric emphasized contrition, he also criticized those who believed that oral confession was not necessary.<sup>37</sup>

This dual emphasis upon the general necessity for both contrition and oral confession persisted through to the late Middle Ages. In Gratian's *Tractatus de Penitencia* the first issue to be addressed is that of the need for confession:

Utrum sola cordis contritione, et secreta satisfactione, absque oris confessione quisque possit Deo satisfacere, redeamus. Sunt enim qui dicunt, quemlibet criminis ueniam sine confessione ecclesiae et sacerdotali iudicio posse promereri . . .<sup>38</sup>

Let us return as to whether anyone through contrition or heart and secret satisfaction without confession of mouth is able to satisfy God. For there are those who say that pardon can be merited for any offence without the confession of the church and the sacerdotal judgment . . .

Gratian makes clear the implicit threat to Church authority posed by the practice of silent confession and resolves the issue in favour of oral

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<sup>37</sup> Allen J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, N.J. 1983), p. 158.

<sup>38</sup> Gratian of Bologna, *Decretum*, edited by Aemilius Friedburg, *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, vol. 1, Dist. I, I Pars (Leipzig, 1879, reprinted Graz, 1979), p. 1160.



confession with reference to Scripture and the Church Fathers.<sup>39</sup> Gratian's influence can be seen throughout the penitential manuals where the same Scriptural citations are employed in order to stress the importance of oral confession as an integral part of the penitential process.

The act of making an oral confession encompassed the confessor's role as both a supportive counselor and finally as a judge of the penitent's sins. The vital tension between presumption and despair-- the "state of dread" or attitude of repentance mixed with hope-- was encouraged by the confessor during confession. However, it was the role of the confessor as a judge of sins which received the bulk of attention in the penitential manuals.

The manuals give three central reasons for the oral confession: first, it causes the penitent to feel shame, secondly it provides the confessor with information upon which to base his assigning of works of satisfaction, and thirdly the avowal of sins puts the penitent under the protection and succor of the Church.<sup>40</sup> As N.J. Gray points out, none of these functions plays a role in the remission of sins (the remission of the eternal debt of sin). However, all three do effect the third part of the sacrament of penance--satisfaction-- since they help to remit the temporal debt of punishment which remains after forgiveness.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1187-1188.

<sup>40</sup> N.J. Gray, p. 91.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p. 92. See T.N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession*, p. 129.

It is interesting to note that in the *Parson's Tale* heavy emphasis is placed upon confession as an occasion for the "shewynge of synnes to the preest" which is in turn a "signe of contricioun".<sup>42</sup> Throughout the remainder of the section devoted to confession, the Parson is careful to instruct the penitent about the origin of sin and its manifestation as both deadly and venial sin. Apart from the first six lines the entire section on confession ("the seconde partie of Penitence") is devoted to a discussion of sin. This general introduction to the nature of sin dovetails with the quite extensive consideration of the seven deadly sins which immediately follows. The focus upon sin in the section on confession, and the insertion of the section of the deadly sins before the discussion of satisfaction, suggest that the act of confession was a time for the complete recitation of the details relevant to the time, place and number of the penitent's sins. This would allow him to gauge the quality of the penitent's contrition, and judge the type and severity of the penances to be assigned.

Although N.J. Gray, with reference to the penitential manuals, describes confession as bearing exclusively upon the third aspect of the sacrament-- satisfaction, the description in the *Parson's Tale* of confession as a sign of contrition gives confession an important role in its own right as a sign of contrition (and thus a basis for absolution) and also as a basis for the imposing of penances or "works of satisfaction".

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<sup>42</sup> *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 296: <sup>323, 317</sup> ~~327~~, ~~328~~.

Satisfaction: "Ad complementum penitentiae requiritur satisfactio"<sup>43</sup>

In the penitential process the remission of the eternal debt of sin--as announced by absolution-- depended upon evidence of full contrition, a complete confession, and the stated intent to perform whatever penances the priest would impose. However, even after absolution a necessary punishment remained which had to be suffered either in the doing of penances or, if the works of satisfaction were not done, after death in purgatory.

The above summary of the penitential process stresses the forensic function of the sacrament in the remission of sin, with the result that a fairly clear division between contrition and satisfaction seems to emerge-- contrition removes the eternal punishment, satisfaction the temporal. From the forensic point of view there are two practical reasons why contrition is easily dissociated from satisfaction: the first stems from the fact that absolution is given to the penitent before he actually performs his penances, the second from the opportunity purgatory provided for the penitent, who had not done works of satisfaction, to pay the temporal debt in the after-life.<sup>44</sup> In other words, within the exclusively forensic framework of eternal and temporal punishments, there was limited reciprocity between contrition and satisfaction. Having expressed sorrow for his sins, there was no binding reason, apart from a fear of purgatory, for the penitent to do

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<sup>43</sup> John de Burgo, *Pupilla Oculi*, Pars V, cap. iv, A (cited by N.J. Gray, pp. 170-71, note 1).

<sup>44</sup> See A. Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights*, pp. 51-52.

works of satisfaction, since they did not affect the remission of eternal punishment.<sup>45</sup>

However, an exclusively forensic description of penance distorts the function of satisfaction as it was conceived and described in the penitential manuals. Although the forensic value of both contrition and satisfaction was formally supported by the manuals, they tended to place more emphasis upon satisfaction as a deterrent to future sinning and as a remedy for the sinful *habitus*-- the ingrained, besetting sin.<sup>46</sup> The remedial function of penance is treated extensively in the manuals where medicinal metaphors abound under the rule of *contrariis contraria curantur*-- sins are cured by their contrary virtues. Thus the tripartite division of works of satisfaction into fasting, prayers, and alms "acquired a remedial rationale", since these penances removed the penitent from the circumstances likely to induce sin. This ethical/remedial function of the works of satisfaction was further augmented by the seven remedial virtues which opposed and cured the seven deadly sins.<sup>47</sup> It should be noted, however, that although the Latin manuals emphasize the ethical/remedial function of both works of

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<sup>45</sup> See T.N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession*, pp. 318-319 who describes both the lack of reciprocity between the forensic functions of contrition and satisfaction, and the attempt by figures such as Lombard to enforce the doing of works of satisfaction by emphasizing the extreme suffering of purgatory: "Logically considered, of course, purgatory is just as transitory as this life, and preachers of repentance were naturally led by this logic to stress absolution from guilt, not remission of punishment . . . But the simplest reason for doing penance on earth comes from Peter Lombard, who warns . . . that suffering in purgatory is a lot more painful than the penitential exercises [works of satisfaction] which remit it during this life".

<sup>46</sup> N.J. Gray, p. 184.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 176-184. See also Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 67 and T.N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession*, pp. 319-320.

satisfaction and the seven remedial virtues, they do not integrate the remedial virtues into the penitential process of contrition, confession and satisfaction. In vernacular compilations, however, which represent penance in terms of a schematic image or extended metaphor (for example *The Book of Vices and Virtues*) the seven remedial virtues are closely integrated in terms of their causal relationship with the sacrament of penance. This development is considered in some detail in Chapter IV and represents, I think, one of the primary contributions of the "second wave" vernacular compilations to the development of penitential theory.

The emphasis upon remedial satisfaction-- a logical extension of contritionism, since to feel sorrow for sins implies a willingness to reform-- is also evident in the restricted use of the term *satisfactio* in the Latin manuals. As N.J. Gray observes, "The 'works of satisfaction' are 'denoted in Latin [the Latin of the penitential manuals] not by *satisfactio*, but by *penitentia*."<sup>48</sup> However, the term *penitentia*, as cited by Lewis and Short, is confined to the sense of repentance and in the Vulgate both the noun *penitentia* and the verb *paeniteo* are used exclusively to signify repentance.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the Latin term one would expect to see used to denote works of satisfaction is *opera satisfactionis* or alternatively the term *poena*-- a term defined in Lewis/Short as "idemnification, compensation, satisfaction, expiation, punishment, penalty"-- and which is used extensively in

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>49</sup> *A Latin Dictionary*, Lewis/Short (Oxford, 1879), Vulgate Matt. 3:2, Eccclus. 48:16, Marc. 1:15.

Gratian's citations of Roman law to mean the paying back of a legal debt.<sup>50</sup>

The application of the term *penitentia* to the works of satisfaction may well have been used in order to exploit the close psychological connection between feeling true sorrow for past sins and the sincere attempt to reform. However, the integration of the works of satisfaction with contrition, which involved emphasizing their shared psychological aspects, implied a further disregard for their rather disparate forensic functions-- functions Gratian's borrowed Roman juristic terminology made distinct. From a forensic point of view the term *penitentia*, when used to refer to both contrition and works of satisfaction, could easily conceal the distinction between eternal and temporal punishments.

Yet another effect of the largely remedial emphasis upon satisfaction in the penitential manuals was the failure to show how its remedial and forensic functions were related. N.J. Gray, in his discussion of Langland's representation of satisfaction, observes that there does appear to be an "inconsistency" between the forensic and remedial functions of satisfaction which he views as "inherent in Langland's sources"-- the penitential manuals. N.J. Gray assumes that Langland merely extends this inconsistency over to *Piers Plowman*. However, a comparison between Langland's representation of satisfaction

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<sup>50</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Dist. 1, C. VI, VIII, vol. 1, p. 1159: " Si quis non dicam rapere, sed attemptare tantum matrimonii iungendi causa sacratissimas uirgines ausus fuerit, capitali pena ferietur" (C. VI). "Scituris etiam prouiniarum rectoribus, quod is, sub cuius amministrazione aliquid huius modi fuerit attemptatum, partis bonorum dimidia proscritionem, et penam exilii per quinquenium sustinebit" (C. VIII).



in a key part of the B-text and that of the C-text shows that while in the B-text he defines satisfaction exclusively in remedial terms, in the C-text he shifts to a strongly forensic definition. If we compare the two texts we can see that the remedial emphasis of the B-text passage stems from the use of the extended metaphor of "washing" which contains all three elements of the sacrament:

"And I shall kenne thee," quod Conscience, "of Contricion to make

That shal clawe thi cote of alle kynnes filthe--

*Cordis contricio* &c;

Dowel shal wasshen it and wryngen it thorough a wis  
confessour--

*Oris confessio* &c;

Dobet shal beten it and bouken it as bright as any scarlet,  
And engreynen in with good wille and Goddes grace to amende  
the,

And sithen sende thee to Satisfaction for to sonnen it after  
*Satisfaccio* (Passus XIV: 16-21).

In the C-text passage, however, there is no extended metaphor and Langland chooses to define satisfaction solely in terms of its forensic function:

*Cordis contricio* comeþ of sorwe in herte,

And *oris confessio* þat comeþ of shrifte of mouþe,

And *operis satisfactio* þat for synnes payeþ,

And for alle synnes soueraynliche quite. (XVII: 29-32).<sup>51</sup>

This discrepancy between these two versions of *Piers* mirrors the apparent "inconsistency" or lack of integration found in the Latin manuals between the forensic and remedial functions of satisfaction. The fact that Langland incorporates a strong remedial emphasis (via the cleansing metaphor) into the B-text, suggests that he followed the remedial emphasis of the Latin manuals more closely there than he did when writing the C-text. However, the forensic and remedial functions never completely supplanted one another within the Latin penitential tradition-- that is, Langland was still orthodox in citing the forensic function of satisfaction in the C-text. The apparent division of the two roles, each to their respective versions of the poem, suggests, I think, an awareness on Langland's part of the difficulties involved in fully integrating these two functions of penance.

This kind of "dialectic of versions" suggests that Langland did not, as N.J. Gray asserts, simply follow the penitential tradition in the writing of *Piers Plowman*.<sup>52</sup> As we shall see in the more specific discussion of Langland's metaphorical or imagistic representation of penance in Chapter IV, the recrudescence of Anselm's and Abelard's forensic/ethical debate makes itself felt in Langland's text (and others') in a way which is both absent from the Latin penitential manuals and perhaps foreign to their pedagogical aims.

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<sup>51</sup> *Piers The Plowman: Text C*, edited by Walter W. Skeat, OS 54-55, E.E.T.S. (London, 1873), p. 282.

<sup>52</sup> N.J. Gray, p. 184 with reference to the B-text of *Piers Plowman*, describes Langland as following the "medieval penitential tradition in emphasizing the remedial, medicinal function of satisfaction".



I do not mean to imply that Langland was necessarily unorthodox in his representation of penance. Indeed, as N.J. Gray has demonstrated, Langland is conspicuous for his adherence to the technicalities of the penitential tradition. However, not all of Langland's representational portrayals of penance reflect clearly the didactic treatments found in the penitential manuals. Such instances point, I believe, to the problem of maintaining an authoritative, orthodox position relative to the penitential tradition, as embodied in the Latin manuals, while attempting, at the same time, to answer to the specific character and very real needs of an audience, needs not always addressed or anticipated by the Latin manuals. Within narrative, allegory, or imagery, an apparent departure from the Latin penitential tradition may serve as rhetorical means to the extension of doctrine to meet a particular audience. The Latin penitential manuals targeted the confessor, but the vernacular allegory or *exemplum* of penance was aimed at the penitent-- whoever he might be-- and therefore also anticipated that penitent's likely level of education, his neuropsychological needs, spiritual disposition, and thus-- to a degree-- his possible interpretive responses.

Robert Mannyng in *Handlyng Synne* provides a clear example of a writer anticipating audience response and attempting to configure his presentation of doctrine accordingly.<sup>53</sup> For instance, Mannyng confronts the putting off of satisfaction until purgatory with the warning that those who "for~~3~~ete" to do their penance in this life will

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<sup>53</sup> According to Idelle Sullens, *Handlyng Synne*, p. XIII "follows the general plan of the *Manuel des Pechiez*" but places rather more emphasis upon narrative. Mannyng substituted tales from sources other than the *Manuel* and seven of his tales are unique to *Handlyng Synne*.

"byte hyt hard Yn purgatorye afterward", since every day that they "forȝetest here" will inflate to a full year of purgatory there (p. 270: 10867-10870). Perhaps the most suprising aspect of Mannyng's instruction on penance is the healthy emphasis upon punishment and the forensic function of satisfaction. Under the heading "The elleuene poynt of shryft" Mannyng makes it clear that the penitent should do his penances since God will not give heaven to those who have not "boght" it:

Be manhede of god wldē noght  
 Haue heuene but hyt were boght.  
 What wenest þou haue hyt for so lytel here  
 Whan god & man boght hyt so dere?  
 By heuene wyþ þy penaunce  
 Or elleswher kepe harder chaunce (p. 293-294: 11819-11824).

There is little evidence here of the nearly exclusive remedial emphasis on satisfaction which predominates in the Latin penitential manuals. However, the remedial function of penance is stressed in Mannyng's couplet that, "Asoyled mayst þou neure be/ But þou wylt þy synne fle" (p. 311: 12501-12502). *Handlyng Synne* provides a considered integration of the importance of contrition expressed as, "but we haue sorowe for oure synne/ þe mercy of god mowe we nat wynne" (p.288: 11581-11582), and the forensic debt-paying function of satisfaction. Notably, Mannyng's approach to the sacrament appears to be guided by an essential awareness of an audience's likely disposition. The various "poynts" concerning penance are clearly intended to guide potential or actual wayward penitents and suggest Mannyng's anticipation of lay

misunderstandings and limitations, and their vulnerability to various deviations from the proper path of penance. Apart from his points on contrition and satisfaction, Mannyng discusses things such as choosing a good confessor (p. 288: 11583-11585), confessing only one's own sins (p. 289: 11620-11622), confessing immediately after the sin (p. 283: 11382-11384) and the problem of those who consider themselves incapable of sinning (p. 291: 11705-11710). These points are also found in the penitential manuals which, after all, were themselves practical aids for confessors. But *Handlyng Synne*, while a member of the penitential tradition of the manuals, differs in its use of the second person pronoun (the penitent is addressed rather than the confessor) and in its considerable inclusion of *exempla*.<sup>54</sup>

Mannyng also provides an instance of a fuller integration of the forensic function of contrition and the remedial function of satisfaction than we find in the Latin manuals. Speaking to those who have "bis boght/ pat werk of penaunce auaylep noght", Mannyng informs them that "gode deeds and penaunce/ Reysen a man to repentaunce" (pp. 270-271: 10881-10886). In other words, Mannyng emphasizes satisfaction as a renewing factor in the sacrament of penance which brings the penitent back into the penitential process through a renewing of contrition. This description of satisfaction and good deeds as acts which renew the penitential process is not found in the Latin penitential tradition as described by N.J. Gray. The Latin manuals

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<sup>54</sup> D.W. Robertson, Jr., "The Cultural Tradition of *Handlyng Synne*", *Speculum*, 22 (1947), 162-85 (p. 175) observes that in the manuals the penitent is referred to in the third person but in *Handlyng Synne* the penitent is addressed directly: "The difference is, of course, due to the fact that the penitentials were intended to describe to priests the various types of sinful activity of which their parishioners were thought to be capable; *Handlyng Synne* was addressed directly to laymen".

present the sacrament of penance as a linear process which ends with the completion of one's satisfaction. *Handlyng Synne* displays a more practical awareness of the necessity of repeating the penitential process and thus defines satisfaction so that it may be seen as leading back to a renewed sorrow for sin.<sup>55</sup> As we shall discuss further in Chapter V, this cyclical notion of the penitential process also emerges in Mannyng's and Langland's handling of the "endings" of exempla. The general impression of the treatment of penance in *Handlyng Synne* is one of careful instruction aimed largely at potential mis-interpretations or distortions of the sacrament of penance. With this in mind it is not difficult to view the dual emphasis in *Handlyng Synne* upon both the forensic and remedial functions of satisfaction not only as a theoretical achievement, but also as a demonstration of a practical awareness of the audience's short-comings.

With the above examples in mind, we may begin to see how vernacular authors-- while ostensibly remaining close to the authoritative doctrine of penance-- experiment with various literary forms and/or rhetorical devices in the attempt to meet audience needs. These changes, although they do not represent serious departures from accepted penitential doctrine, nevertheless do show how the doctrine could be re-shaped simply by reconfiguring it either as imagery or narrative, or simply in terms of rhetorical emphasis. Thus, while it may be important initially to examine such vernacular treatments of penance in terms of their theoretical and technical correspondence with Latin sources, in the final analysis attention should also be given to the literary forms as

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<sup>55</sup> D.W. Robertson, "The Cultural Tradition of *Handlyng Synne*", p. 166 notes that in Mannyng's prologue there is an emphasis placed upon the fact that the individual sins every day.

rhetorical devices for the effecting of certain (and from the doctrinal point of view, orthodox) responses before judging the doctrinal accuracy of a work.

In the Chapter which follows, considerable attention is given to the origins, nature, and various functions of the figural *res* or image as a mnemonic and organizing device which enabled the reader to internalize the doctrine as he read it, memorized it, and finally acted upon it. This discussion, while not directly concerned with penance, provides a basis for the more focused analysis of penance and its modes of representation found in Chapters IV and V. As I will attempt to show in Chapter IV, the evolution of the *res* or image as a mnemonic and organizing device for the compiler (*compiler*) also initiated a greater awareness of how best to represent the doctrine of penance, and other doctrinal elements with it, so that the reader's moral or behavioural response to the texts would correctly reflect the doctrine of the Latin manuals.

## CHAPTER III

## Interpretation and Representation

In Chapter II we considered the penitential tradition and noted some differences between the treatment of penance in the "first wave" Latin manuals (intended for the confessor) and the "second wave" vernacular works of instruction aimed primarily at the penitent. To summarize, these differences were described in terms of an increased tendency on the part of the vernacular writer to anticipate likely reader responses and to modify his presentation of penance rhetorically in order to guide his readers towards a correct understanding of the sacrament of penance (see p. 35). The present Chapter, although not directly concerned with penance, looks more broadly at the genesis of late medieval figural imagery and examines its role in the vernacular expression of doctrine.

The medieval preacher was not unaware that the ways in which divine truths are expressed in Scripture are as diverse as the conditions of mankind they address. As Alexander of Hales stated in his *Summa*: since the end (*finis*) of Scripture and preaching is to instruct sinners in the ways of salvation, and since the conditions of men are manifold; then the mode of instruction must also be manifold so that the "mode matches the objective" (see pp. 55-56). Alexander's syllogism is central, I believe, to an awareness of the function of the figural modes for the teaching of doctrine. Christian doctrine was secure, indeed it was the ultimate point of reference for medieval textuality.



It was because of that very security-- the *a priori* and unified nature of divine truth-- that attention could be given by the late medieval preacher or teacher to the development of texts which would cater to the diversity of needs and conditions represented by the laity, while maintaining the essential unity and integrity of doctrine. The genre which emerged as the primary vehicle for the teaching of doctrine was the compilation (*compilatio*). As a teaching aid the compilation-- whether in the form of a sermon, tract, picture or allegory-- brought together various topical groups of doctrine and organized them using a variety of techniques ranging from alphabetical ordering to the use of schematic images such as trees or castles. It is the latter compiling technique-- the use of the figural image-- which we will consider in general terms in the present Chapter and in more specific ways, in Chapter IV, as an important influence upon the ways in which penance was taught in the "second wave" vernacular compilations.

A central tenet of the interpretation of Scripture was that God spoke by means of figurative language in order to bring invisible divine truths within the cognitive grasp of sinful men.<sup>1</sup> Before the Fall, man had a more direct apprehension of God, an inward vision which did not depend upon bodily or material sight for its understanding. After the Fall man's vision became limited to the visible things or *res* of the temporal world; his understanding was defined by what he could see with the "outward eyes of the body".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George H. Tavard, *Transiency and Permanence: The Nature of Theology According to St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1954), pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> The term "res" is used here in the limited sense defined by Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana* as "that which is never employed as a sign of anything else: for example, wood, stone, cattle, and other

Gregory the Great likened man's expulsion from Eden, and his consequent spiritual blindness, to the experience of a child born and raised in prison whose knowledge of the sun, moon, stars, and mountains is limited to the stories or descriptions given him by his mother. He has no direct experience of the outside world, and the darkness of the prison is more real and more believable than what, for him, are the invisible things of his mother's stories.<sup>3</sup>

In view of this gulf between the visible and invisible realms, Scripture and the Incarnation act as vital bridges between the realm of invisible spiritual truths and visible temporal things.<sup>4</sup> Augustine's temporal *res*, unable to signify, may become, through the inspirational medium of Scripture, a figural *res* (figural sign) which has the capability to signify just as a word or *signum* (proper sign) does.

This signifying power of things or *res* was held to be the primary distinguishing feature of Scripture as compared to profane literature. As Hugh of St. Victor explains in his twelfth-century work, the *Didascalicon*, the philosopher knows only the signifying power of words (Augustine's "proper signs") as established by "usage". Words as signs are inferior to the "significance of things" (Augustine's "figural signs") since the figural signs are established not by temporal "usage"

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things of that kind". See *On Christian Doctrine; The Enchiridion*, translated by J.F. Shaw (Edinburgh, 1873), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> G.R. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> G.H. Tavad, *Transiency and Permanence*, p. 5.



but by divine wisdom.<sup>5</sup> Thomas Aquinas echoes the same principle in his definition of the nature of the inspiration of Scripture:

We must acknowledge that God is the author of Holy Scripture. It lies within His power, not only to provide words to convey a required meaning-- something which men can do-- but also to provide the things themselves [to which the words refer].<sup>6</sup>

Augustine cites the stone which Jacob used as a pillow and the ram which Abraham offered up instead of his son as two examples of *res* which have the power to signify; they are "things which are signs of other things".<sup>7</sup> These *res* are given to us by God, according to Augustine, in order to convey the thoughts of God to man through visible things.<sup>8</sup> They are, like the Incarnation, embodiments of divine truth which,

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<sup>5</sup> A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism (c. 1100- c. 1375): The Commentary Tradition* (Oxford, 1988) p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine distinguishes between "things which are signs of other things" ("figural signs") and "signs . . . which are never employed except as signs" ("proper signs" or words). The difference lies in the status of words as things which can only function as signs, whereas "figural signs" can function both as signs and as things: "Signs are figurative when the things themselves which we indicate by the proper names are used to signify something else, as we say *bos*, and understand by that syllable the ox, which is ordinarily called by that name; but then further by that ox understand a preacher of the gospel as Scripture signifies . . ." (*De Doctrina Christiana*, pp. 8,9,43). This distinction works upon the epistemological premise that the term "bos" calls up before "the eye of the mind" the "species" of an actual ox as imprinted upon the memory. This "species", which is held in the memory, in turn functions as a "figural sign"-- a sign which is rooted in the original sense perception of an actual ox (*De Trinitate*, p. 275).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

although temporal or visible, are nonetheless rooted in the transcendental or invisible.

Augustine invokes Paul in his description of the movement from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight as a journey from an alien country back to the "fatherland":

Suppose, then, we were wanderers in a strange country, and could not live happily away from our fatherland, and that we felt wretched in our wandering, and wishing to put an end to our misery, determined to return home. We find, however that we must make use of some mode of conveyance . . . We have wandered far from God; and if we wish to return to our Father's home, this world must be used, [*utor*] not enjoyed [*fruor*], that so the invisible things of God may be clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,-- that is, that by means of what is material and temporary we may lay hold upon that which is spiritual and eternal.<sup>9</sup>

Augustine's description of visible *res* as "modes of conveyance" highlights the Neoplatonic influence at work in his understanding of the relationship between the visible and invisible: we are to *use* the temporal things in order that we might *enjoy* the spiritual things. If, however, we linger in order to enjoy the temporal things, if we "set ourselves to enjoy those things which we ought to use", we might easily

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<sup>9</sup> *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 10.

"turn back from the pursuit of the real and proper objects of enjoyment".<sup>10</sup>

For Augustine the transition from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight was made possible by the Incarnation: the "Word made flesh". The "Wisdom of God" or Christ, the proper object of our enjoyment, appeared to men in the form of mortal flesh in order that the "outward eye" could see what the "weak and dim" inward, spiritual eye could not. Thus spiritual blindness was remedied, since Christ demonstrated in the visible and mortal state the invisible divine attributes. However, Augustine makes clear that the Incarnation lost nothing of the reality of divine truth since, although the "form" of truth changed from invisible to visible, the essential nature of truth remained unchanged:

In what way did He come but this, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"? Just as when we speak, in order that what we have in our minds may enter through the ear into the mind of the hearer, the word which we have in our hearts becomes an outward sound and is called speech; and yet our thought does not lose itself in the sound, but remains complete in itself, and takes the form of speech without being modified in its own nature by the change: so the Divine Word, though suffering no change of nature, yet became flesh . . .<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

The paradox inherent to the Incarnation-- the invisible taking the form of the visible-- works to free sinful man from his "bondage to temporal things". Christ's mortality restores to us immortality, his death brings us life; sin came through a woman's "corrupted soul", but the remedy came through a "woman's virgin body". In short, the means by which we originally sinned become, by the power of the Incarnation, the means by which we return to God. However, Augustine's view of the Incarnation-- again much influenced by Neoplatonism-- asserts that Christ's mortality is not itself a goal worthy of true enjoyment. We should not go on "weakly clinging to temporal things", even though Christ used them to effect our salvation we should "pass over them quickly". Augustine describes the "whole temporal dispensation" as that which should be used rather than enjoyed:

. . . we ought to use that dispensation, not with such love and delight as if it were a good to rest in, but with a transient feeling rather, such as we have towards the road, or carriages, or other things that are merely means . . . we are to love the things by which we are borne only for the sake of that towards which we are borne.<sup>12</sup>

The role of the temporal dispensation (Christ's assumption of mortality) as a vehicle for divine truths is replicated in the role of Scripture as a means to the end of love and enjoyment of the Trinity. The incarnate life of Christ and the inspired Word of God both serve as temporal "modes of conveyance" or "means" to non-temporal ends. As with Augustine's definition of the role of the temporal dispensation in the

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Incarnation, so the "sensible" or figural aspects of Scripture are merely vehicles of Divine truth which lead to the realm of transcendental truth:

It must be said that the ray of divine revelation is not destroyed by the sensible images with which, as Dionysius says, it is veiled. But it remains rooted in its own essential truth, so that the minds to which it is revealed are not permitted to remain in the realm of images, but it raises them up to a recognition of intellectual truths . . .<sup>13</sup>

The figural *res*, although necessary for the communication of truth to fallen man, nevertheless has a limited use as a "means" to the "end" of invisible divine truths.

### **Medieval Exegesis and the Spiritual Senses**

In practice the medieval exegete ensured that the Scriptural text would accurately convey divine truth by dividing the meaning of the text into two levels: the literal-historical and the spiritual.<sup>14</sup> The relationship between these two senses, according to Augustine, was

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The Sum of Theology*: Ia I, Articles 9 and 10 (cited by A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 240).

<sup>14</sup> The "literal-historical" is defined by Alister McGrath as the "literal meaning of the text, as determined by its historical context". *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford, 1985), p. 80.

essentially a practical one which supported the *a priori* status of divine truth; the Scripture should be interpreted literally where possible, but if when taken literally a passage of Scripture did not promote either love for God or sound doctrine it should then be interpreted figuratively.<sup>15</sup> The figurative mode of Scripture (Augustine's "figural *res*") in turn pointed to, or signified, one or sometimes all of three spiritual or mystical senses: the allegorical, the tropological, and the anagogical.<sup>16</sup> As Hugh of St. Victor states in the *Didascalicon*, the problems of contradiction and absurdity that afflict the reader of the literal sense are resolved by the spiritual senses:

Even so the divine page, in its literal sense, contains many things which seem to be both opposed to each other and, sometimes, to impart something which smacks of the absurd or the impossible. But the spiritual meaning admits no opposition; in it, many things can be different from one another, but none can be opposed.<sup>17</sup>

The unified, but diverse, nature of the spiritual senses allowed Scripture to be interpreted from a variety of exegetical points of view.

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<sup>15</sup> Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1983), p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> Aquinas elaborates the spiritual senses as follows: "The allegorical sense is that whereby those things which are of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law. The moral sense is that whereby those things which are done in the person of Christ or those things which prefigure Christ are guides to what we ought to be doing. But in so far as they signify what lies ahead in eternal glory, that is the anagogical sense." A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 242.

<sup>17</sup> A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 78.

However, any appeal to the spiritual sense of a given passage must not deviate from the authority of doctrine; differences are allowed, but not contradictions or heretical readings.

Therefore truth must be understood by faith prior to any attempt to interpret Scripture, since Scripture itself can only be understood-- especially in its figurative mode-- in the light of doctrine. The medieval exegete did not interpret Scripture in order to discover doctrine, he interpreted Scripture (and the figural *res*) in order to teach and confirm doctrine:

The biblical exegete has no doubt as to the meaning he will end up with. That is indeed the most solidly established point of his strategy; The Bible expresses Christian doctrine.<sup>13</sup>

Although, as we shall see in the following section, the emphasis upon the literal or spiritual senses varied a good deal among commentators, the essential *a priori* status of doctrine remained secure and with it the use of the spiritual senses. As Henry of Ghent makes clear in his recitation of Augustine's rule:

Every reader who approaches Holy Scripture with the intention of expounding it, when troubled by some discordant opinion expressed in the sacred writings, must with faith that is sure and unshaken steadfastly believe that truth is

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<sup>13</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, translated by Catherine Porter (London, 1983), p. 109.



nowhere absent [in Scripture]<sup>19</sup>. . . the rule laid down by Augustine provides that whenever the text literally interpreted can have no true historical meaning, then recourse must be had to the mystical sense, and the passage must be expounded not in its proper meaning but figuratively. So, that text has no true historical sense of its own, but the words are put there figuratively for the sake of the mystical sense, and the passage ought to be understood metaphorically.<sup>19</sup>

Thus to understand a passage of Scripture figuratively is, according to Henry of Ghent, to look for a possible spiritual sense that will reflect authoritative doctrine. This search should not begin, of course, unless the exegete already possesses a good grounding in the fundamentals of the faith and the seven liberal arts. Hugh of St. Victor warns the novice exegete against attempting to study Scripture without first obtaining a secure grounding in authoritative doctrine:

The very bases of your spiritual structure [exegesis] are certain principles of the faith-- principles which form your starting point . . . First learn briefly and clearly what is to be believed about the Trinity, what you ought unquestionably to profess and truthfully to believe. . . You see that many who read the Scriptures, because they have not a foundation of truth, fall into various errors and change their views almost as often as they sit down to read. But you see others who, in accordance with that knowledge of the

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<sup>19</sup> A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 264.



truth upon which, interiorly, they are solidly based, know how to bend all scriptural passages whatever into fitting interpretations and to judge both what is out of keeping with sound faith and what is consonant with it.<sup>20</sup>

Martin Luther, in his commentary on the Psalms (1513-15), describes doctrine in terms of a hermeneutical canon which defines all legitimate Scriptural exegesis.<sup>21</sup> Luther eventually abandoned this view in favor of an exclusively literal interpretation of the Biblical text; an approach to Scripture which the earlier Luther, and indeed all late-medieval commentators, would have viewed as heretical. Henry of Ghent roundly condemns an exclusively literal reading of Scripture as an identifying mark of heretics:

For whenever some absurdity is introduced by heretics in the literal sense, we must immediately have recourse to the sound spiritual interpretation.<sup>22</sup>

The weakness of the heretic's literal reading lies in its reproduction of the contradictions and absurdities inherent to many parts of the literal text. The spiritual senses, however, support the essential *a priori* status of doctrine and lay claim to the unity of that doctrine as the interpretive goal of exegesis. Although, as we shall see in the next section, medieval exegesis in the thirteenth and fourteenth

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<sup>20</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon* (cited by A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, pp. 79-80).

<sup>21</sup> Alister McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p. 81.

<sup>22</sup> A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 264.

centuries discovered fresh approaches to the literal sense, the *a priori* status of doctrine remained secure.

### Scripture's Literal Sense and Rhetorical Decorum

It should not be imagined that the practice of exegesis, as formulated by Augustine, failed to take into account the value of the literal sense. Beryl Smalley has described Augustine as trying "to steer a middle course between the literal and allegorical" and generally avoiding the displacement of the literal sense with a "subjective spiritual interpretation".<sup>23</sup>

However, Augustine's position might best be summarized in his own description, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, of the two legitimate ways in which one might interpret Scripture. Augustine demands as the primary exegetical standard that the gloss "build up" the "twofold love of God and our neighbour". The preferred interpretation is always that which follows the "intention of the author" (the literal sense) and which, by implication, always builds towards charity. However, Augustine does not prohibit a second type of interpretation which, although it does not accurately convey authorial intention, manages to build towards love. In such a case the interpreter is mistaken, but his "error is not pernicious, and he is wholly clear from the charge of deception".<sup>24</sup> Augustine's reservations towards such mistaken interpretations are

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<sup>23</sup> Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>24</sup> *De Doctrina Christiana*, p. 30.

rooted in his view that such practices eventually produce more contradictions and difficulties than they can resolve:

For if he takes up rashly a meaning which the author whom he is reading did not intend, he often falls in with other statements which he cannot harmonize with this meaning.<sup>25</sup>

This warning is not an ironic reversal of the spiritual senses, since Augustine saw the spiritual senses as a reflection not only of doctrine or the Divine Author, but also of the human author of Scripture; rather the warning bears upon the "rash" neglect of the human author's intention.

Augustine's general recognition of the human author was further developed by the more specific analysis of the literal sense among theologians of the thirteenth-century. A.J. Minnis identifies Aristotle's *Physica* and *Metaphysica* as important influences which led to what he refers to as a "quest for an orthodox literalism".<sup>26</sup> Although Augustine implicitly recognized the role of the human author in the writing of Scripture; commentators such as Bonaventure, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas greatly enlarged their understanding of the role of Scripture's authors through the application of Aristotelian theories of causality. Thomas Aquinas, for example, extended a new significance to the role of the human author, and thus the literal sense, by claiming that as an "instrumental efficient cause" the human

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, second edition (Aldershot, 1988), pp. 75-84, 89.

author's unique talents and personality were not erased by inspiration, rather they were appropriated by it. As A.J. Minnis states:

It would appear that the influence of Aristotle's theory of causality as understood by late-medieval schoolmen helped bring about a new awareness of the integrity of the individual human auctor. Henceforth each and every inspired writer would be given credit for his personal literary contribution . . . working in harmony with the crucial (but rarely overbearing) factor of divine direction.<sup>27</sup>

One effect of Aquinas' definition of the human author's role in Scripture can be seen in his exegesis of David's sin with Bathsheba. Aquinas understood this story within the literal sense as an *exemplum* of the truly penitent man.<sup>28</sup> This interpretation contrasts with that provided by Henry of Ghent where David was interpreted allegorically as Christ and Uriah as Satan. It is clear from Henry's tract that he is opposed to the Thomist interpretation of the text in question. In response to the question "Whether Truth is Inherent in Every Exposition and Sense" (the title of his tract), Henry first cites the objection made by some that the interpretation of David as Christ and Uriah as Satan falsifies the literal sense because it was David who sinned, not Uriah. This objection could, it seems, have been made by Augustine as well as by Aquinas, but Henry, in an ironical twist, appropriates Aristotle as support for the interpretation of David as Christ.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>28</sup> A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 207.

According to Henry we must consider two aspects of David's sin: its substance as a deed (*substantia facti*) and its quality as a deed (*qualitas facti*). Henry admits that in terms of quality no good or moral sense is present in the deed, but he claims that in terms of substance the deed "can indeed have a true exposition in a good sense".<sup>29</sup>

The terms *substantia* and *qualitas* are readily identifiable as the two main elements in Aristotle's *Categories*. Henry uses Aristotle in order to divide the quality of murder (evil intent) from the substance of the deed of ordering or causing a "knight" to be killed.<sup>30</sup> By removing the *qualitas facti* Henry could see his way clear to interpreting David's action as having "an allegorical interpretation that is good, and being expounded for a good end, as the Gloss has in fact expounded in that passage."<sup>31</sup> However, this defence of the *Glossa Ordinaria* required a severance of the evil intent, which informed David's action, from the deed itself, a ploy analogous to the severance of a Scriptural author's intent from an exegete's interpretation. Henry

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>30</sup> I am aware of two other instances in which a similar separation of substance and quality is carried out. Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1987), p. 993 states that in the case of the Eucharist late-medieval theologians altered the "Aristotelian conception of accident [or quality] in the face of Transubstantiation." I am grateful to Dr. John Haldane, "Voluntarism and realism in medieval ethics", *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 15 (1989), 39-44 (p. 41) for suggesting that Aquinas uses a similar division to explain instances in the Old Testament where God appears to sanction immoral acts such as murder and theft. "God has the power to change the circumstances of an action so that what would otherwise have been theft [the dispoiling of the Egyptians] is rendered permissible though it retains the appearance of robbery".

<sup>31</sup> A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 265.

of Ghent's preference for an allegorical interpretation of David and Uriah does not accord well with either Augustine's exegetical principles or with the medieval Aristotelian recognition of the author's intent. Henry's tenuous and rather extended appeal to Aristotle's division between substance and accident fails, in spirit, to support the naturalistic impetus which Aristotle's works exerted upon the whole of medieval thought.

The recognition of the human author as an active participant in the transmission of divine truth leads, quite naturally, to an interest in his literary style. In Aquinas' commentary on the Psalter, written in 1272-3, there is a marked interest in the division of the literal sense into various levels or modes, a practice formerly reserved for the spiritual senses. Although Aquinas does not entirely dispense with the spiritual senses he does demonstrate, as A.J. Minnis states it, a tendency "to reduce the amount of allegorical interpretation."<sup>32</sup> However, Aquinas correspondingly expanded his commentary on the various modes he identified as part of the literal sense. He asserted that the literal sense of Scripture possessed a "multiform mode" or *multiplex modus* which worked to adapt divine truth to the various dispositions of the human audience. This recognition of the rhetorical modes in Scripture-- Aquinas identified a special *modus agendi* in the Psalms of "praise and oration" which he suggested might be analysed with the help of Cicero-- points to a developing recognition not only of the human author, but also of the human audience.<sup>33</sup> Having identified the Psalms' literary use/exploitation of rhetorical features, Aquinas

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<sup>32</sup> A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 89-90.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 89-90.



implicitly acknowledged the need for Scripture to speak rhetorically to the diverseness which makes up human society. The figural *res*, with its various meanings, works rhetorically within Scripture making it possible for the preacher to observe the principle of rhetorical *decorum*, since he can choose from a range of meanings in order to make his sermon "fit" the circumstances or special needs of his audience.<sup>34</sup>

A key aspect of audience diversity, and one which particularly bears upon the teaching of penance, has to do with the many emotional dispositions or affections (*affectus*) of the audience. The pseudo-Augustinian *Liber de spiritu et anima* claimed that the human mind was divided into two parts: the reason and the affective or *affectus*. The rational power enabled man to know the various aspects of reality such as God, angels and creation. The affective power was divided into the four emotions of delight, misery, love, and fear. These four emotions were in turn the "fount and common material of all the vices and virtues".<sup>35</sup>

The basic distinction between the reason and the *affectus* was further employed by the thirteenth-century schoolmen in order to differentiate between the human sciences and theology. According to Alexander of Hales, Robert Grosseteste, Robert Kilwardby, and Richard Fishacre, theology (the divine science) works rhetorically to "move" the

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<sup>34</sup> See Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, (Cambridge, 1990), p. 25: "Human understanding occurs in an occasional setting; it is not universally and eternally fixed for ever. By their very nature signs are sensible, practical, worldly, belong to the traditional realm of rhetoric and must be understood within its procedures, most particularly the process of *decorum*, of fitting a word to a thing in terms that an audience will understand".

<sup>35</sup> A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 120.

*affectus* towards piety and good deeds. Alexander of Hales described the division of the sciences with a clear emphasis upon the affective and multi-form literal modes of Scripture:

There are two methods of achieving knowledge, one which operates through the understanding of the truth by human reason, while the other operates through the inculcation of a pious disposition (*affectus pietatis*) by means of divine instruction. The first mode must be by definition, analysis, and deduction. Such a mode must exist in human branches of knowledge because the apprehension of truth in accordance with human reasoning is unfolded through analyses, definitions, and logical arguments. The second mode must be by way of precept, example, exhortation, revelation, and prayer, because these methods are appropriate to a pious disposition. This is the mode of Holy Scripture.<sup>36</sup>

Especially important is the connection Alexander makes in the passage above between the multi-form or rhetorical mode of "example, exhortation, revelation, and prayer" and the pious disposition or *affectus*. The rhetorical mode was considered appropriate for the "moving" of the affections or desires towards virtue. This rhetorical effect was also applied to the use of the figural modes of imagery and allegory. By seeing a picture or by visualising with the mind's eye the literary imagery or allegory of a vernacular compilation, the audience would be moved to perform or emulate the doctrine or virtues that the imagery

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<sup>36</sup> Alexander's *Sum of Theology*; Introductory Treatise, Question I, Chapter 4: Article I (translated by A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 214).



conveyed or "contained".<sup>37</sup> Thus, the figural *res*-- whether found in Scripture or in vernacular compilations-- was primarily a rhetorical device which, as it was imprinted upon the memory, "moved" the reader or listener towards a pious disposition. The interrelationships between the figural *res*, the *affectus*, virtue, and the memory are discussed in more detail later in this Chapter. For the present, however, I would emphasize that as the literal sense was more fully appreciated for its rhetorical force, so the function of the figural *res* was valorized for its rhetorical impact upon the human *affectus* and consequent "imprint" upon the memory of *imagines* or "likenesses" of the *res*, and the doctrine and emotional "responses" (*intentiones*) which those "likenesses" contained.<sup>38</sup>

Further evidence of a late-medieval recognition of the literal sense and its multiform or rhetorical mode is found in Alexander's description of the various conditions (*status*) of men:

The conditions [*status*] of men are manifold: in the time of the Law, in the time after the Law, in the time of prophecy, in the time of *grace*. Even within these periods the conditions of men are manifold. For some are sluggish in matters relating to faith, some are rebellious in matters relating to good morality . . . Some pass their lives in

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<sup>37</sup> Susan K. Hagen, *Allegorical Remembrance: A Study of The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man as a Medieval Treatise on Seeing and Remembering* (Athens, Georgia, 1990), p. 7: "The strength of the visual image to the medieval eye is such that it can capture a heart or dictate a life . . . it can compel men and women to action, and it can sustain that compulsion over a lifetime."

<sup>38</sup> See M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 182-183.

prosperity, some in adversity, some in good works, some in sin. The conclusion must be drawn that the teaching of Holy Scripture, which has been ordained for the salvation of men, must employ a multiple mode, so that the mode matches the objective.<sup>39</sup>

Alexander's description of the multiple mode extends the rhetorical function of the literal sense, and indeed the figural *res*, beyond the moving of the disposition (*affectus*) to the instruction of the various conditions (*status*) of men, a development which recognizes fully the function of rhetoric (i.e. preaching) as a form of teaching which adapts the general didactic content of a given figural *res* to meet the needs, circumstances, and dispositions of a particular audience "so that the mode matches the objective". As M.J. Carruthers states it:

Rhetorically conceived, ethics is the application of a *res* or generalized content (most often expressed in a textual maxim) to a specific, present occasion *which is public in nature*, because it requires an audience. Rhetoric "makes" commonplaces by a process of adaptation. Normative or transcendental analysis, in contrast, "discovers" a universal, timeless principle amid the detritus of the event, and its moral truth is unconditioned by audience, occasion, speaker, or text. But rhetoric does not normalize an occasion, it occasionalizes a norm.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *AS. Miralis* and J.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*,  
p. 219.

<sup>40</sup> M. Carruthers,  
*The Book of Memory*, pp. 180-181.

As a preacher writing for preachers Alexander took into account not only the psychological divisions of the *affectus* common to all men; he also recognized the existence of numerous human conditions which are determined, each in their respective individual, according to time, place, intelligence, and inclination. Thus the literal sense with its multiform mode was directed, in Alexander's view, not only at that which was common, but also to that which was particular and individual.

Alexander's view that Scripture speaks in a multiform mode also had to answer to the objection that a uniform mode was better than a multiform mode because "a multiple mode confuses the understanding (*intellectus*)".<sup>41</sup> In response to this Alexander asserted that the literal modes of Scripture spoke not only to the *affectus* and the *status* of men, but also conformed to the *intellectus* of various men:

To the objection that a multiple mode confuses the understanding, we must reply that this is not true. In fact it instructs the understanding. The understanding may be slow, it may be quick, or it may be moderately quick. So, the truth must be taught in different ways and in a different form to the slow, quick, and moderately quick understanding . . .<sup>42</sup>

With Alexander's description of the multiform mode of Scripture we begin to move away from Scriptural exegesis per se towards the teaching

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<sup>41</sup> Alexander of Hales, *Sum of Theology*, Introductory Treatise, Question I, Chapter 4: Article 3 (translated by A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 218).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219,

of Scriptural truth and doctrine to a public audience. The multiform mode certainly has a bearing upon exegetical commentary, but as a preacher Alexander places more emphasis upon the representational qualities of the multiform mode with its ability to communicate doctrine to the individual within the audience. This emphasis has, I believe, a strong analogous relationship to the representations of penance provided by Langland and Mannyng discussed in the previous Chapter. Where we saw the extension of doctrine to meet particular audiences or classes of individuals, and dealt with the likelihood in such cases that the vernacular representations would fail to correspond exactly with the "first wave" didactic forms of the penitential manuals. Alexander's primary objective in describing the multiform mode of Scripture was to educate preachers effectively to instruct the sinner; it is my view that Alexander's emphasis upon the individual member of the audience is an important back-drop to the consideration of late medieval representations of penance. As M.J. Carruthers makes clear, the emphasis upon the rhetorical and ethical function of the literal sense and figural *res* involves a recognition of the necessary "conditioning" of "moral truth", according to the rhetorical principle of *decorum*, to fit particular audiences-- "rhetoric does not normalize an occasion, it occasionalizes a norm" (see above p. 58).

However, just as Langland could potentially be accused of heterodoxy because his representation of penance fails to correspond *exactly* with the Latin manuals, so Alexander, with his emphasis upon the individual, could easily be perceived as fragmenting and potentially subverting the unity of authoritative doctrine (see above pp. 20-21). I have argued that Langland and Mannyng both exhibit the sophistication necessary for

meeting both the needs of an audience and the demands for a unified and orthodox doctrine-- they "occasionalize a norm", they do not necessarily "relativize" a doctrine. But, as Henry of Ghent argues, there are some very serious practical barriers to the full implementation of Alexander's homiletic goals.

Henry of Ghent in *The Sum of Ordinary Questions* confronted the issue, raised by Alexander, as to the ability of Scripture or doctrine in general to speak to the individual member of an audience. We find that Henry, like Alexander, believed that the sole purpose of theology is to make divine truth known to man. However, while Henry acknowledged the situation of man in regards to the *affectus* and the *intellectus*, he refused to recognize the *status* of individual men as pertaining to the teaching of doctrine:

This science [theology] is not able to cover all the individual things which relate to its subject-matter individually and separately, and to teach the elements of Christian belief in a way that exactly suits all the various conditions that men find themselves in.<sup>43</sup>

Henry appears to be suspicious of the rhetorical use which Alexander would make of Scripture, Alexander's claim that the Scripture is multiform because the *status* of men is manifold is rejected by Henry for both practical and theoretical reasons:

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

Likewise, the mode of this science cannot be manifold simply because of the manifold nature of the human condition. For in that case, that science would have to be passed on to one sort of men in one place, and to another sort in a different place, and not in its totality in all places. Thus, it would not be offered in its totality everywhere to every condition of men.<sup>44</sup>

The fundamental difference between Alexander and Henry lies in their respective views on the nature and construction of the *sermo*. Henry correctly, I think, identifies potential problems which a preacher would encounter when trying to implement Alexander's notion that Scripture's multiform mode matches the various conditions or *status* of individuals. In any given sermon, according to Henry, one must bring together the disparate teachings (*sententiae*) of Scripture so that they are presented in their full unity. Henry sees Alexander's application of Scripture to the various *status* of men as leading inevitably to a fragmentation of doctrine, since the preacher would conceivably select only those aspects of doctrine suitable to the general condition of the men he happened to address at any particular time and place. As Henry implies, Alexander's programme, if put into practice, could involve a sort of pastoral segregation of the various types of men into different physical locations. Henry of course finds this absurd and thus completely rejects the idea that Scripture's mode matches the *status* of men. What he does concede is that Scripture caters to the understanding (*intellectus*) of various men, but he denies that this requires a multiple mode. Instead he claims that a "uniform mode"--- appropriate to

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.



the "greater unity" of Scripture as opposed to any of the other sciences-- effectively conveys doctrine via the spiritual and literal senses.

But the mode used ought to be such that disparate teachings (*sententiae*) concerning different subjects and different tenets of belief should be contained in one and the same discourse (*sermo*), and that these should be tailored to suit various conditions of men, so that the man who cannot assimilate more may be content with the surface literal interpretation, but the man who can may seek the spiritual understanding underneath the literal one.<sup>45</sup>

Although Henry's portrayal of the problems inherent in Alexander's notion of preaching suggests that the attempt to reach all conditions (*status*) of men is impractical, it is equally true that Henry's refusal to acknowledge the relevance of these conditions to preaching is unrealistic. The conditions of men cannot be limited to the intellectual, and the spiritual senses of Scriptural exegesis cannot always answer to the more emotional needs which Alexander identifies in his description of the individual disposition (*status*). We have only to consider the psychological states of presumption and despair, as defined within the penitential context, to realize that the various conditions (*status*) of men could only be ignored at the risk of rendering void sacramental penance-- that is, subverting one aspect of the "uniformity" or "universality" of truth that Henry is so anxious to conserve. As I observed in Chapter II, the confessor or preacher had the responsibility

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.



of helping the penitent to avoid these two extreme psychological states (see above p. 24). The *status* of the individual prone to presumption called for the preacher or confessor to emphasize judgement and the fear of damnation, in other words to "adapt" his mode of discourse to the circumstances or *status* of this audience; likewise, the penitent who tended towards spiritual despair called for a rhetorical emphasis upon God's mercy towards sinners.

It may be noted that the segregation of sinners according to their *status* (labeled as absurd by Henry) is perhaps best exemplified within the one-to-one dialogue of the confessional: the subject treated is the same (sacrament of penance) but the mode of treatment varies rhetorically according to the *status* of each individual. However, the fragmentation of doctrine which Henry seems to fear does pose a real threat when the penitential discourse or *sermo* is delivered, in public, to a group of penitents. In such a situation the preacher would probably be confronted not only with the opposing conditions of the presumptuous and the despairing, but also with the realization that to cater to either one of these groups' special needs could easily lead to a reinforcement of the other group's negative state of mind. This problem, and various preachers' attempts to resolve it, are discussed at length in Chapter V; for the present it is sufficient to note that the increased interest in the *modus agendi* of Scripture, and the development of the notion of a *multiplex modus* show both an increasing awareness of the audience's neuropsychological make-up (the power of the *affectus* and the memory), and its intellectual and spiritual circumstances.

Although the views of Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and Henry of Ghent concerning the diversity of the *affectus*, the *intellect*, and the *status* of men apply specifically to Scriptural discourse, we shall see in Chapter IV that these principles also inform the making and adaptation of figural representations of penance (making the "mode fit the objective"), representations which demonstrate a fundamentally rhetorical-- and also ethical-- utility.<sup>48</sup> I have suggested in the case of Alexander and Henry how their respective points of view (*multiplex* mode versus uniform mode) may inform our reading of penitential *exempla* (see above p. 61). However, it is usually the case that the vernacular spiritual writer or compiler does not provide us with a theoretical background to his own *modus agendi*. This of course means that attempts to show connections between medieval literary theory and vernacular imagery and *exempla* must in general remain tentative. Yet these connections, if tentative, are also rather more numerous, I believe, than has been commonly supposed. In the following sections such links will be pursued on the wider plane of scholastic ideas about the memory, ethics, and the further development of the figural *res* as a rhetorical device for the structuring of the vernacular, "second wave" *compilatio*. In general these aspects of late medieval thought are used

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<sup>48</sup> See Charles Runacres, "Art and Ethics in the Exempla of *Confessio Amantis*" in *Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments*, edited by A.J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1983), 107-134 (p. 115): citing Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum* where the correct mode for the teaching of Ethics is described as the "figural et grossus", Runacres observes that "the end sought in ethics is not knowledge but works, not truth but the good. Ethical knowledge is not intellectual, but affective . . . [ethical discourse] must instruct by means of "euydens and figures and liknes". Gile's specific reference to "figures" and "likenesses" points to the important links between the figural *res*, and ethics or good deeds. Furthermore, as we shall see later in this Chapter, the use of "likenesses" was also important to the development of the memory, and a well-trained memory, in turn, made possible the formation of a virtuous life (see below, pp. 77-85).

to point to the increasing awareness that to teach doctrine requires a thorough understanding of the rhetorical principle of *decorum*-- that is, in choosing the *forma tractatus* or structure of his literary work the compiler must understand not only the subject, but also the circumstances of the various members of his audience; the mode of discourse should ideally accomodate both.

### The *Distinctio* and Rhetorical Copiousness

Just as Scripture's literal sense was appreciated for its rhetorical functions, so the medieval preacher also thought increasingly in terms of constructing his sermon rhetorically so that the mode "matched the objective"-- that is, suited the audience. However, in order to make a sermon work rhetorically the preacher would need to have at his disposal a compendium not only of various figural *res*, but also of the various "meanings" which each *res* signified. As M.J. Carruthers has observed, the full employment of rhetorical *decorum* presumes a "copiousness" of meanings, definitions, and examples for any single "truth" or *res*. This "copiousness" allows the preacher to choose from a "storehouse" or "inventory" of collected meanings, so that his sermon "fits" the occasion and audience for which it is intended.<sup>47</sup> In order to facilitate the construction of sermons which "fitted" their occasions and audiences, the medieval preaching tradition brought together in the form of the "spiritual dictionary" or "concordance" extensive

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<sup>47</sup> M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 26.

collections of figural *res* (or topics), each with a listing of its various meanings.

Such forms of concordance-- properly known as *distinctiones*-- were early examples of the *compilatio* (twelfth-century) used either as preaching resources, much like the present day Biblical concordance, or were incorporated more or less directly into sermon form.<sup>48</sup> However, in its use of the figural *res*, the *distinctio* has special significance for the development of vernacular imagery and allegory, representations of doctrine which, I believe, expressed ethical truths in ways which enabled the individual member of an audience to make his own memory a "storehouse" or "inventory" of copious ethical meaning.

The late Judson Boyce Allen, in his extended analysis of the *distinctio*, identified three types of the genre.<sup>49</sup> We shall briefly consider each of these types, with examples, but attention will be focused primarily upon the third type of *distinctio*. The first type, as J.B. Allen notes, has as its subject headings various figural *res* under which are listed or schematically arranged their respective spiritual senses or meanings. An example of this type is found in the twelfth-century *Allegoriae in Universam Sacram Scripturam*.<sup>50</sup> Under the

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<sup>48</sup> See Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus florum of Thomas of Ireland* (Toronto, 1979), pp. 7-11, 69-70.

<sup>49</sup> Judson Boyce Allen, *The Friar as Critic: Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (Nashville, Tenn. 1971), pp. 98-116.

<sup>50</sup> *Patrologia Latina*, edited by J.P. Migne (Paris, 1844-64), 112: 849-1088. Migne erroneously attributes the *Allegoriae* to Rabanus Maurus; the work is now considered likely to be the work of an early twelfth-century figure perhaps Garner or Warner of Rochefort (d. after 1225). See R.E. Kaske, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: A Guide to*

heading "Tree" (*Arbor*) we find nine different spiritual senses listed; for each of the nine meanings there is also given the Scriptural text from which the figural *res* is taken. In the following example *Arbor* is shown to signify the knowledge of God (*humilis Dei scientia*):

*Arbor, humilis Dei scientia, ut in Evangelio: <Ascendit Zachaeus sycomorum, ut videret Jesum>, quod nisi stultam Dei sapientiam apprehendamus, Christum comprehendere non meremur.*

Tree, the basic knowledge of God, as in the Gospel:  
<Zachaeus climbed a sycamore, in order that he might see Jesus>, because unless we attain the simple knowledge of God, we are not worthy to apprehend Christ.<sup>51</sup>

The second type of *distinctio* differs from the first type in its use of topical, abstract or theological headings rather than figural *res*. As J.B. Allen puts it, the second type has "as its subject some moral abstraction, theological theme, or religious fact, under which are arrayed its partial meanings, aspects or subsections".<sup>52</sup> An example of this type of *distinctio*, in its more continuous or sermon form, may be found in the C-text of *Piers Plowman* as edited by Skeat from the Huntington Library MS 137.<sup>53</sup> This MS of the C-text was considerably "improved" by scribes whose efforts to re-organize the text have been

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*Interpretation* (Toronto, 1988), p. 33.

<sup>51</sup> *PL*, 112: 849.

<sup>52</sup> J.B. Allen, *The Friar as Critic*, p. 106.

<sup>53</sup> *The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman, in Three Parallel Texts*, edited by W.W. Skeat.



described as following the principle of *compilatio*.<sup>54</sup> This sort of organization (or scribal interference) can be seen in the insertion of the sub-heading *distinctio paupertatis* over the section on poverty in Passus XVII of the Huntington MS. The relevant passage in the C-text closely resembles the second type *distinctio* with a total of ten aspects or benefits of poverty cited, along with Latin mnemonic tags, as part of Patience's definition of poverty. The sermon form of this *distinctio* effectively renders into English and elaborates upon the Latin passage-- taken from Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*-- which Patience first offers to Active as a definition of poverty.<sup>55</sup>

The third type of *distinctio*, as described by J.B. Allen, "is a combination of the other two", since its configuration combines the figural *res* of the first type with the thematic or topical thrust of the second type:

Here [the third type] the subject is a single thing [*res*] with a single spiritual meaning, under which are distinguished all the aspects of that thing, each containing spiritually one aspect of the meaning which is the theme of the whole.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See M.B. Parkes, "The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book" in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays presented to R.W. Hunt*, edited by J.J. Alexander and M.T. Gibson (Oxford, 1976), pp. 115-41.

<sup>55</sup> See W. Skeat, Passus XVII: 117-156.

<sup>56</sup> J.B. Allen, *The Friar as Critic*, p. 106.

J.B. Allen provides an example of this third type which illustrates how a given figural *res*, when viewed in terms of its multiple physical properties or parts, may be anatomized or schematized so that as a single thing it "contains" more than one spiritual meaning.

Lilies are said to be the saints for many reasons. Because of the luster of their innocence . . . because they cure inflammation . . . because the flower stands upright, in which is understood rectitude of intention . . . Otherwise one can say that there are many things in the lily which should be considered, which ought to be involved in good works.<sup>57</sup>

We have seen in the first type of *distinctio* the effort to collect under a given figural *res* its spiritual meanings as found throughout Scripture. In the second type, a similar strategy is employed to elaborate upon various thematic or topical headings. The third type's description of the properties of the lily as "reasons" for the figural meaning of the lily as the "saints", suggests the possibility of taking a single figural *res*, such as *Arbor*, and anatomizing it into its constituent parts (roots, trunk, branches, twigs, leaves, and fruit) with each part being given a spiritual or doctrinal meaning, the sum total of which would constitute not only the spatial form of the figural *res* but also its meaning or theme. This technique of anatomizing the constituent parts of the figural *res* exploits the possibilities inherent to things such as trees and castles for showing specific and detailed aspects of various doctrines (rhetorical "copiousness") while at the

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.



same time preserving a sense of doctrinal unity. Furthermore, as we shall see in Chapter IV, the organic unity of figures such as trees or castles allowed the compiler to depict doctrine in ways which showed the causal integration of various doctrinal groups or doctrinal elements. Perhaps most importantly, however, the use of the anatomized figural *res* or extended image (for example the "Tree of vices or virtues" or Robert Grosseteste's figural castle) meant that doctrine could be represented in the spatial and visual form necessary for the memorization of doctrine.<sup>58</sup> We shall consider in detail the vital role of the memory for the practice of Christian virtues in the final section of this Chapter. For the present, it is important to emphasize the role of the figural *res* or, more specifically, the role of the anatomized figural *res* as an extension of the third type of *distinctio* which not only compiled "copiously" numerous elements of the Christian faith, but which also represented them in the terms of a "pictorial whole" or schematic image.<sup>59</sup>

In order to further clarify what is meant by the term "pictorial whole" or schematic image I will compare the standard exegetical interpretation of a figural *res* (according to the four senses) with a

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<sup>58</sup> An influential example of the "Trees of Vices and Virtues" may be found in Hugh of St. Victor's, *De Fructibus Carnis et Spiritus*, in *PL*, 176: 997. For an example of the figural castle see *The Middle English Translations of Robert Grosseteste's Chateau D'Amour*, edited by Kari Sajavaara (Helsinki, 1967), pp. 260-319. There were many variations of the figural castle including Langland's castle of Truth in *Passus V* (see below p. 136).

<sup>59</sup> J.B. Allen, *The Friar as Critic*, p. 107 has described the shift from the third type of *distinctio* to the "picture" as "simply the result of taking one more step. The picture is a thing with a meaning, but the thing, the literal description, is not a single object but a collection of them, all subsumed under a single meaning, and all, more or less, integrated into a single pictorial whole".

figural *res* configured as a *distinctio*, and finally with a pictorial or schematic version of a figural *res*. It should be emphasized, however, that these different configurations of the figural *res* (or different approaches to rhetorical "copiousness") do not necessarily mark a chronological development away from the traditional use of the four senses. Rather, each of these configurations of the figural *res* has a primary application within a certain pedagogical context; the interpretation of the figural *res* according to the four senses is used consistently as the mainstay of Scriptural commentary, the *distinctio* works especially well as a sermon structure, and the anatomized figural *res* or schematic image is often used within tracts or books of religious instruction for the laity as a mnemonic device.

Our first example is drawn from Nicholas of Lyre who, in the general prologue to his *Postill*, provides an example of how the three spiritual senses could have been derived from the figural *res* "Jerusalem":

The word "Jerusalem" can be taken as an example of these four senses. According to the literal sense it signifies a certain city . . . According to the moral sense it signifies the faithful soul . . . According to the allegorical sense it signifies the Church Militant . . . According to the anagogical sense it signifies the Church Triumphant.<sup>60</sup>

According to the traditional use of the figural *res*, the literal or material Jerusalem as a figural *res* is able—because of the divine

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<sup>60</sup> *Biblia sacra cum Glossa ordinaria et Postilla Nicolai Lyrani* (translated by A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 267).

inspiration of Scripture-- to signify three spiritual senses (see above p. 44). Nicholas of Lyre essentially provides us, perhaps unintentionally, with a mini *distinctio* in his elucidation of these spiritual senses, since each sense is drawn from a different Scriptural passage.

In a description of the methodology behind the putting together of an actual *distinctio*, Thomas Waleys shows how the *distinctio* differed in method-- if not always in actual effect-- from the traditional method of Biblical commentaries:

Another way to develop a sermon is through the use of the *distinctio* or the plurality. This is a popular way. It is sometimes taken from the way Sacred Scripture has of speaking symbolically and figuratively in different places; whenever it is used, it is very beautiful and lengthy. For example, take this text to work on: "She has fed him with the bread of life." Eccl. 20 [15:3]. I say that as far as we can find from Scripture, the children of Israel used three kinds of bread: one whose ingredients they took with them into the desert . . . as is clear from Exodus 12; another which they used for forty years in the desert . . . Psalm [77:24] . . . the third which they used after they entered the promised land . . . Josue 5 [:12]. The first bread is the bread of penance . . . The second bread is the bread of the Eucharist . . . The third bread is the bread of glory . . . Thus you see, in this example, how from various

figurative places in the Scripture, a *distinctio* on bread can be put together.<sup>61</sup>

The only substantial difference between Nicholas's and Thomas's interpretation of the figural *res* is that of presentation. Thomas's *distinctio* isolates the figural *res* with its possible spiritual senses or meanings from the "parent" text-- that is, the Scripture. In other words, having chosen the figural *res* of "bread", Thomas is free to develop that term thematically-- using various Scriptural passages-- without having to return, as Nicholas's commentary would, to the Scripture in order to comment upon successive passages. This difference may appear slight, but when put into an actual sermon the *distinctio* comes into its own as a technique for the thematic integration of doctrinal elements.<sup>62</sup>

In sermon 15 in Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C. 751 (fols. 94v-102v), we find an example of how a preacher might use a *distinctio* for

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<sup>61</sup> *Artes praedicandi: Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge*, edited by T. Charland (Paris, 1936), pp. 397-398 (translated and cited by J.B. Allen, *The Friar as Critic*, pp. 103-104).

<sup>62</sup> Waleys' use of the term "plurality" as a synonym for *distinctio* is highly suggestive of the connection made in the Middle Ages between a "plurality" or "copiousness" of remembered *res* or "meanings" and the ability to distinguish between good and evil-- the function of the "political" virtue of "prudence". The compiler of the *Summa Virtutum De Remediis Anime*, edited by Siegfried Wenzel (Athens, Georgia, 1984), p. 54 defines the function of prudence as a meditative exercise which "takes counsel" before deciding what action to pursue when faced with a moral dilemma: "Good exists indivisible, but evil manifold. Therefore, since the good is difficult to find, counsel must come first of all, as Sallust says: "Before you begin, take counsel, and after you have taken counsel, promptly do the work!". As M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 66-67 shows (citing Aquinas), the exercise or "counsel" of prudence requires a "treasury" of many memories, a kind of "internal" *distinctio* or "plurality": "prudence requires the memory of many things. Hence memory is part of prudence."

"bread" in order to develop an elaborate and thematically coherent sermon dealing with a broad spectrum of doctrinal groups and elements.<sup>63</sup> The sermon compiler calls attention to five "loaves" in God's "goostly pantere" each of which, in turn, is interpreted. The first loaf is "the Word", the second is "Penance", the third is "temporal goods", the fourth is the "Eucharist", and the fifth is "eternal life". This arrangement does not appear to make any significant advance upon either Nicholas' commentary division of the figural *res* according to the four senses, or upon Thomas's abbreviated example of the *distinctio* methodology. However, the sermon compiler goes on to further elaborate upon each of these five loaves. The loaf of Penance, for example, is considered first in terms of its spiritual effects (it obtains forgiveness, reconciles the soul with God, and gains heaven). Having established this, the compiler then divides the loaf into "three morsels": contrition, confession, and satisfaction. These three penitential elements, or morsels, are then elucidated further as each morsel is itself divided into three smaller morsels. Thus, while there is one loaf of Penance, this loaf must be divided or anatomized into a total of nine different morsels in order to provide the sermon audience with a complete description of the doctrine.

This division and sub-division of the loaf of Penance underlines the effect of the *distinctio* in isolating the figural *res* from its Scriptural context. Removed from its "parent" text the figural *res* is exploited as a "material object" in its own right, "copiousness" is achieved through the anatomization of a "loaf" into pieces, thus we end

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<sup>63</sup> For a description and outline of sermon 15, see Christina von Nolcken, "Some Alphabetical Compendia and How Preachers Used them in Fourteenth-Century England", *Viator*, 12 (1981), 272-288 (pp. 279-281).



up with a schematic image which--- via its anatomized parts--- "contains" a compendium of doctrinal elements.

The notion of the anatomized figural *res* or schematic image finds full expression in Hugh of St. Victor's exposition of Noah's Ark. Beginning with the literal Ark Hugh soon finds that he cannot help but present a total of four "Arks":

But look what has happened. We set out to talk about one ark, and one thing has led to another that it seems now we have to speak not of one only, but of four.<sup>64</sup>

Hugh goes on to identify the "four Arks" using a technique of *distinctio* similar to that demonstrated by Thomas Waleys:

The first is that which Noah made, with hatchets and axes, using wood and pitch as his materials. The second is that which Christ made through His preachers, by gathering the nations into a single confession of faith. The third is that which wisdom builds daily in our hearts through continual meditation on the law of God. The fourth is that which mother grace effects in us by joining together many virtues.

However, Hugh combines his one-to-one equation between "Arks" and senses (each of the senses has its own respective "Ark") with the rather

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<sup>64</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, *Selected Spiritual Writings*, translated by "A Religious of C.S.M.V." (London, 1962), pp. 59-60.

awkward view that there is a sense in which all the "Arks" are really one and the same Ark:

Nevertheless there is in a certain sense only one Ark everywhere . . . the form is one, though the matter is different, for that which is actualized in the wood is actualized also in the people, and that which is found in the heart is the same as that which is found in charity.

Hugh attempts to make visible the "one Ark" in his instructions for the drawing of a pictorial Ark as a symbolic representation (*symbolica demonstratio*) not only of the four senses, but of the whole-- as it were-- of Christian doctrine.<sup>65</sup> The resulting picture, essentially a schematic image, does not resemble the allegorized Ark of the four spiritual senses which Hugh initially describes. Instead, adapting Origen's picture of the symbolic Ark, Hugh describes a diagrammatic picture or schematic image which works as the "spiritual form" of all "Arks", a "mystical" Ark which, as M.J. Carruthers has observed, combines the features of a *mappa mundi*, and a *genealogia* with the "vices and virtues", the books of the Bible, and numerous other aspects of Christian belief.<sup>66</sup> The schematic character of the resulting picture strongly suggests the method of the third type of *distinctio*, but beyond the anatomization of the Ark's constituent parts into a "copiousness" of

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<sup>65</sup> M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 232, has noted that the "details" of Hugh's "model" of the ark are "impossible to graph completely . . . because they shift and change-- indeed, this "picture" only works as a mental encyclopedia, whose lineaments can merge and separate and shuffle about in the way that mental images do, but two-dimensional ones fixed on a page cannot."

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.



diverse but integrated truths, this Ark also marks a further (and nearly complete) departure from the "parent" text of Scripture, since as an image Hugh's "cosmographical" Ark is not a picture of the historical Ark of Genesis nor an allegorical interpretation of it. Instead, as M.J. Carruthers notes, Hugh's Ark is a picture (in abbreviated form) of the more lengthy treatments of Books I, II, and IV, of his *De arca morali*.<sup>67</sup> The relationship between Hugh's schematic picture of his Ark and the earlier didactic material which it summarizes *breviter et summam*, is based upon the need to transfer the "doctrine" to the mind (memory) of the reader. In other words Hugh's Ark is a memory device, a figural *res* which "contains" the whole of Hugh's three books in a spatial and schematized image which, as it is meditated upon, "imprints" upon the mind of the reader or listener both the image of the Ark and its "copious" didactic "content".

The importance of the memory to the ethical development of the Christian individual is discussed in more detail below, for the present there is a more immediate point to be made concerning the relationship between Hugh's Ark and the *distinctio*. Like the first and second types of the *distinctio*, Hugh's Ark conveys the "copiousness" essential to rhetorical *decorum*, and-- as with the third-type of *distinctio*-- the Ark displays the anatomization of constituent parts into various "properties" or meanings. However, while Hugh's Ark-- as a mnemonic device-- shares many of the features of the *distinctio* in all three of its types, its function is significantly different, since rather than functioning as a "storehouse" or "inventory" for the use of preachers,

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

it functions as a schematic image which-- when memorized by its readers-- serves as a mental "storehouse" from which the individual may draw for his personal, private use. This difference between the textual, material "storehouse" (the compilation or *distinctio*) and the mental "storehouse" or the "book" of the individual memory also marks the transfer of rhetorical "copiousness" from the material realm of the *distinctio* to the inner-realm of the individual memory. As with the compilation or *distinctio*, the memory image functioned as a "storehouse" of various truths. However, the "book" of the memory would, I believe, work differently from the material book of the *distinctio* in that the internal memory image (with its didactic content) had the important role of functioning as a "mirror", enabling the "reason" to make considered judgements when faced with moral choices.<sup>68</sup> There is a sense, I think, in which the [REDACTED] relationship between rhetorical "copiousness" and *decorum* has a moral counter-part in the relationship between the establishing of a "copious" memory, and the choice to "do-well" (or act with "decorum"?).

#### ARS MEMORANDI

The utility of the figural *res* may be described in general terms as having two aspects: it works rhetorically to make invisible truths "visible" to fallen man and thus "move" them to piety, and it works mnemonically to ensure that the rhetorical and "moving" experience which the use of the *res* occasioned will be recollected and thus incorporated

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<sup>68</sup> See M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 65-68.

into the moral make-up of the individual. Thus far in this Chapter the rhetorical nature of the figural *res* has been considered in its two symbiotic aspects: *decorum* and "copiousness". Under the term *decorum* we considered Alexander of Hales' and Henry of Ghent's views concerning Scripture's mode of discourse, and the need for the preacher to choose Scriptural passages which "fit" the audience-- that is, choosing a "mode" to match the "objective" (see above, pp. 55-56). As an essential resource, the *distinctio* was identified as a "storehouse" or "inventory" which provided the preacher with a book of rhetorical "copiousness" from which to choose topics or figural *res* appropriate to the circumstances and conditions of his perceived audience (see above, p. 64). In the "third type" of *distinctio* the figural *res* was identified as homologous with the anatomized picture or image, employed in order to achieve rhetorical "copiousness" while at the same time preserving a close unity between multiple "senses" or meanings. Finally, in Hugh of St. Victor's pictorial or schematic Ark we saw an example of a schematic figural *res* which was intended to aid in the memorization of Hugh's didactic Book *De arca Noe morali* (see above pp. 75-76). The Ark, like any other figural *res* in Scripture, would conventionally sustain as many as three spiritual senses (see above p. 44). However, Hugh's pictorial Ark is constructed not as an exegetical figural *res*, but as a memory image into which Hugh pours-- *breviter et summatim*-- the whole of the preceeding Books of the *De arca morali*. As I suggested above, this marks a departure from the "parent" text of Scripture, but it also displays the expectation that scriptural and moral knowledge will be transferred from the material books of the commentary, didactic tract, sermon, or ultimately the *distinctio*, to the memory and, indeed, to the life of the individual reader or listener.

It is this function of the anatomized figural *res* (or schematic image) as a memory device which appears central to many Middle English representations of penance. As we shall see in Chapter IV, the schematic image or extended metaphor serves as an important structural device which both integrates doctrinal groups and helps ensure that they will be "internalized" by the audience via memorization. The remainder of this Chapter describes the process which effects the transfer of the figural *res* from the material book of *distinctiones* ("plurality"), to the "book" of the "copious" memory.

Albert the Great, in his commentary on Tully's *De Inventione*, clearly states the importance of the figural *res* to the establishing of a "trained memory" which, in turn, acts as the necessary foundation for the exercise of ethical wisdom or prudence:

We say that art of memory is best which Tully teaches, above all with respect to those things-for-remembering which pertain to how we live and to justice, and these memories chiefly relate to ethics and rhetoric because since the action of human life consists in particular events, it is necessary that this art be within the soul through corporeal images; in these images however it will not remain except within the memory. Whence we say that among all those things which point towards ethical wisdom, the most necessary is trained memory, because from past events we are

guided in the present and the future, and not from the converse.<sup>69</sup>

Albert's use of the term "corporeal images" applies specifically to the "artificial memory", a habit or condition (*habitus*) which builds up the "natural memory" through "an orderly arrangement of images and places".<sup>70</sup>

The place of the figural *res* or schematic image in the memory process becomes clear in light of the memory's role as a bridge between the sensible part of the soul, the imagination, and the abstracting "intellect" or rational part of the soul. According to Aquinas the memory is situated in the sensible part of the soul, but because the abstracting intellect interacts with the memory, the memory is *per accidens* an aspect of the rational part of the soul.<sup>71</sup> Albert--clarifying the interaction of memory and intellect-- explains that although "corporeal images" are necessary to reminiscence, since reminiscence is part of the "rational soul" it cannot, in terms of its own nature, "exist in corporeal images". In other words the power or faculty of reminiscence, as part of the rational soul, cannot, by definition, contain things which are "corporeal". However, as Albert suggests, reminiscence may "exist" in the rational part of the soul through "likenesses", "translations" and "metaphors":

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<sup>69</sup> See M. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, Appendix B, 267-280 (p. 275).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>71</sup> Francis Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London, 1966), pp. 70-71.

Since reminiscence has no storehouse except only the memory, and reminiscence is part of the rational soul, it is necessary that something which exists as part of reason be stored-up in corporeal images. Since however, something which exists as part of reason cannot, by means of its own nature, exist in corporeal images, it is necessary that it exist there in them through likeness and translation and metaphor, as for example, for "joy" the most similar mental "place" [*locus*] is a meadow, and for "feebleness" an infirmary or hospital and for "justice" a courtroom, and so for the rest . . .<sup>72</sup>

It should be emphasized that Albert is describing here not the "sensory memory" whereby we recall material objects, but the "intellectual memory" (the "bridge" between the sensible and rational parts of the soul) through which we both know and remember "concepts" or "abstractions". Although Albert is considering the rhetorical and ethical function of the "artificial memory", his description of how abstract concepts are recalled through metaphors or likenesses finds correlative support in Aristotle's description of the epistemological role of the "intellectual memory" in *De anima*. Aristotle claims that both material particulars and "concepts" are apprehended by the intellect through images, but in the case of concepts, as Albert has shown, notions such as "justice" are known (and also recalled) via their association with images or "likenesses" (*imagines*):

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.



Aristotle says that both concepts and "singulars" are known through images-- sensory objects by the likenesses we get through our senses, and concepts by images which we associate with them.<sup>73</sup>

Within the context of teaching penance, it is clear, with reference to Aristotle, that in order to make the essentially conceptual nature of the doctrine accessible to the laity, metaphors or likenesses must be employed. However, beyond the mere apprehension of penance as a concept lies the need to "internalize" the doctrine so that its abstract principles are translated, via images, not only to the intellect, but also to the daily life. As we have already seen in Hugh of St. Victor's Ark, the figural *res*-- when anatomized according to its constituent parts into a "brief summary" (*breviter et summatim*) of an extended body of doctrine-- serves as a memory image which, if learned, enables the individual to exercise prudence. The anatomized figural *res* or schematic image, a feature of both the third type *distinctio* and the memory image, is referred to by Albert as the "image" or "likeness" which "serves the memory as a likeness appropriate to a sentiment remembered through its separate parts."<sup>74</sup>

Central to the utility of the figural *res* as a memory image is its inherent power for "containing" not only the *sentencia* or doctrine associated with the image, but also the reader's or listener's initial

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.



responses (*intentiones*) to the image. According to M.J. Carruthers, the term *intentio* means:

opinion about or reaction to something. It also means something less definite, related to the concept in rhetorical and literary theory of "points of view".<sup>75</sup>

The meaning of *intentio* as "points of view" has special application, as we shall see in Chapter V, to the use of *exempla*, where the "association" between the narrative and its doctrinal "concept" or message is vulnerable to the distortion by the reader's emotional disposition (*affectus*) or "point of view". However, simply defined as an emotional "response" or "reaction" to a memory image, *intentio* was described by Avicenna as the "content" of the sensible memory image.<sup>76</sup> Because every image which is "imprinted" upon our memories is sensible, it "affects" or "moves" our senses and our emotions (*affectus*) during the process of being received by the memory. These emotional changes occur at the time we first "see" or "hear" the image, but since they are embodied as part of the "likenesses" (*imagines*) stored in the memory they are re-experienced whenever we recollect or "re-present" the image to our mind's eye.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, as Aristotle states it, a memory likeness is an *affection*, and memory itself a "condition" (*habitus*) produced by the trained recollection of memory likenesses-- the "re-

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54. The term *intentio* was also used in the exegetical context to refer to the didactic "intention" or "purpose" of an author (*intentio auctoris*); see A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 20.

<sup>77</sup> M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 54-56.

presentation" of both image and affective "response" (*intentio*).<sup>78</sup>

The emotional or "affective" *habitus* of the trained memory serves a vital function as the basis for the exercise of moral prudence. As M.J. Carruthers states it:

The *hexis* [*habitus*] or orientation of the moral organism which disposes it to act righteously is prudence. And this learned disposition or virtue in turn is the product of "repeated individual emotional responses [what I have called reactions, the *intentio*-part of each phantasm], leading to action in a variety of situations." Hence, the ability of the memory to re-collect and re-present past perceptions is the foundation of all moral training and excellence of judgement.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, training the memory was essential to reforming the life, since with each "re-presentation" of the memory likeness the actual tissue of the brain was "re-imprinted" with the initial *intentio* or emotional experience of being "moved" towards a pious disposition.<sup>80</sup> The

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>80</sup> See Siegfried Wenzel, *Summa Virtutum De Remediis Anime*, p. 52: the stress upon a "plurality" of repeated actions as the necessary basis for moral reform is repeated by the compiler of the *summa* in his explanation of the etymology of the term "plurality" or *polus* as applied to the "political" or "cardinal" virtues (including prudence): "A political virtue is a virtue acquired through the exercise of deeds that are good by their nature. And since such a virtue derives from repeated action, it is named from "*polus*", that is, plurality, for just as through often playing the harp well one becomes a good harpist, so

trained memory or *habitus*-- to use the rhetorical analogy of adapting the "mode to match the objective"-- supplies in its compendium of "imprinted" *imagines* a "copiousness" of affective experience from which the virtue of "prudence" (an aspect of the power of "reason") may choose as it adapts the individual to "match" the objective or *finis* of righteousness (see above pp. 76-77).<sup>81</sup>

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through acting well in many ways one becomes good."

<sup>81</sup> The analogy between the rhetorical principle of adapting the mode to fit the objective and the adapting of the character to make it fit for salvation is suggested by Aquinas in his definition of "prudence" in the *Summa theologiae*: "Man is directed indeed to his due end by a virtue which perfects the soul in the appetitive part (the "will") . . . For a man to be rightly adapted to what *fits* his due end, however, he needs a habit in his reason ("prudence") . . ." (cited by M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 66). The adaptation of man to "fit" his "due end" requires the virtue of "prudence", a condition or *habitus* which, in turn, draws upon the *habitus* of the "copious" trained memory as a kind of "storehouse" or, in rhetorical terms, a *collectio* or *distinctio* of emotionally charged memory likenesses.

## CHAPTER IV

## Teaching Penance with Schematic Imagery

Thus far both the doctrine of penance and the representational modes of the anatomized or schematized figural *res* have been considered separately from each other. It now remains to examine specific examples of schematized figural *res* that teach penance, in order to discover the extent to which these representations change or modify the doctrine in order to meet audience psychological needs (mnemonic aids) and guide reader response. The third type of *distinctio* (or schematic image) with its structural emphasis upon the pictorial whole, again surfaces in this Chapter as a common literary technique, not only as an organizing device in the compilation, but as potential memory image, and as a feature which makes possible a further integration of penance with other doctrinal groups such as the remedial virtues.

## Schematic imagery in the Book of Vices and Virtues

The first example, the fifteenth century *Book of Vices and Virtues* (a M.E. translation of the thirteenth century French *Somme le roy* written by the Dominican Friar Laurent Gallus), employs two central or paradigmatic schematic images which serve both as organizing devices for the text's *divisio* of respective doctrinal elements and which also

closely integrate penance with other doctrinal elements such as the *Pater noster*, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the seven remedial virtues.(see above, p. 6)<sup>1</sup>

The relevance of the *Vices and Virtues* to this study lies not only in its treatment of the sacrament of penance, but also in its use of sources already familiar to us as examples of Latin penitential manuals. Rosemond Tuve associates the *Vices and Virtues* with Peckham's 1281 Constitutions which-- in keeping with the decree of the fourth Lateran Council (1215) that all Christians must go to confession once per year-- stimulated the production of vernacular instructional manuals on penance, the vices and virtues and other related doctrinal elements such as the ten commandments, and the creed (see above, p. 1).<sup>2</sup> Peckham's Constitutions set, as it were, the syllabus for the vernacular compilations of religious instruction. However, while some compilers were content only to organize their texts according to chapters, headings and sub-headings, others employed the schematic image which, in addition to its affective and mnemonic function, could also provide causal links between different doctrinal elements, thereby producing the integration of penance with other doctrinal groups already mentioned.

The two likely sources for the *Vices and Virtues*, Peraldus's *Summa de vitiis et de Virtutibus* and Raymond of Pennafort's *Summa*, are examples of the "first wave" Latin manual tradition which, as we have

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<sup>1</sup> M.W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, pp. 125, 182.

<sup>2</sup> Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery* (Princeton, 1974), p. 80.

seen in Chapters I and II, held position as authoritative doctrinal sources with regards to the production of "second wave" vernacular compilations on penance and the vices and virtues (see above, pp. 2-3).<sup>3</sup> As a compilation, the *Vices and Virtues* is remarkable for its use of the schematic image as a structural device which organizes the didactic material by "anatomizing" its constituent parts in a way similar to Hugh of St. Victor's mnemonic Ark and reminiscent of the third type of *distinctio*. Furthermore, apart from the mnemonic advantage of using images or pictures, the anatomized aspect of the text's structure also provides causal, organic links between various doctrinal groups, a feature of the compilation which, as we shall see, helps define further the function of penance relative to both the life of the individual penitent and other doctrinal groups within the Peckham syllabus.

Pennaforte's *Summa*, from which also Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* is partially derived, deals primarily with the sacrament of penance which he treats in plain didactic prose and with considerable detail. That Pennaforte's main concern is with penance, although he does include a listing of the seven sins, suggests his *Summa* as a source primarily for the section in the *Vices and Virtues* on penance. It is probable that Peraldus's *Summa de Vitiis et de Virtutibus* had more of an impact in terms of the over-all thematic structure of the *Vices and Virtues*, since whereas penance forms the main bulk of Pennaforte's *Summa*, it occupies a secondary role as a sub-section of the virtue of "fortitude" in the *Vices and Virtues*. This fact, as we shall see, has some interesting

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<sup>3</sup> M. W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 125.

implications for the integration of penance with the remedial virtues. By grafting penance (through the schematic "tree" image) into a work concerned primarily with the vices and virtues, Laurent integrates penance more fully with other important, but formally non-sacramental elements of Christian belief and practice. This integration, as we shall see, effects an important linkage between the forensic and remedial functions of penance.

In describing both the seven remedial virtues and seven vices the compiler uses two tree images, one for each of the opposing sets. Given the didactic purpose of the text this arrangement is not inappropriate, since the two sets bear a mutually exclusive relation to one other in the sense that each vice or virtue, in order to exist, must by definition displace its opposite. As Rosemond Tuve has noted, this use of opposing of tree images is more appropriate for the setting forth of the remedial virtues and the vices than the *Psychomachia* battle allegory, since in the latter scheme the two sides are depicted existing simultaneously.<sup>4</sup>

The mutually exclusive nature of the two trees is incorporated into the structure of the *Vices and Virtues* with the use of two central, paradigmatic images: the beast of the Apocalypse and the garden of man's soul. The compiler introduces the seven vices using the beast image, a scheme which allows for a succinct didactic tagging of the beast's torso, feet, mouth, heads, and horns. The seven heads are listed as the seven vices and the ten horns as the "brekyng" of the Ten commandments:

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<sup>4</sup> R. Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*, p. 89.



þe body of þe best, as seip seynt Iohn, was lik a liberd,  
 for riȝt as a leopard haþ dyuerse coloures, riȝt so haþ þe  
 deucl dyuerse suteltees and giles to bigile and to tempte  
 wiþ þe folke. His feet were lik a bere, þat wiþ strengþe of  
 his feet and legges halt faste and harde vnder hym þat he  
 may cache; riȝt so dop þe deucl alle þo þat he may ouercome  
 and cache in synne. þe moup & þroote was lik a lyoun, þat  
 deuoure. and sweleweþ þat he may hente. þe seuene heuedes  
 of þe best of helle bep þe seuene chief synnes, bi whiche þe  
 deucl draweþ to hym welny al þis world . . . þe ten hornes  
 of þe best bitokneþ þe brekyng of þe ten commaundementes of  
 oure lord, þat þe deucl purchaceþ al þat he may þurgh þe  
 seuene synnes bifor seid. þe ten corones bitokneþ þe  
 victories þat he haþ ouer alle synful men . . .<sup>5</sup>

This image is visually striking, capable of "moving" the "affections" (*affectus*), abbreviated, and thus easily remembered. Its function, in view of the subsequent development of the schematic tree image, appears to be that of a mnemonic aid which, although abbreviated (*breviter et summatim*), would ensure that the reader was able to retain a central memory image which, when recollected, would serve as an outline and meditational cue for the entire treatise.

A similar type of "central image" or *imago rebus* advocated by Quintilian as a useful way for the orator to bring together large bodies

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<sup>5</sup> *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, edited by W. Nelson Francis, O.S. 217, E.E.T.S. (London, 1942), pp. 10-11: 13-33 and 1-4.

of material stored in the memory. In the Middle Ages similar use was often made of a book's "table of contents" where the chapter headings could serve as a rough outline or as cues for the recitation of memorized sermons or *exempla*. For example, in the prologue to the fourteenth-century Latin text of the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* the compiler explains that a "list of contents" has been provided to aid the "poor preacher" who cannot afford the book and who must, therefore, preach from a copy of the "list of contents", a strategy which presumes that the main content of the text could be memorized:

This is the end of the chapter headings of this book. I have compiled the said list of contents, providing a summary, for the sake of poor preachers, so that if by any chance they cannot afford to buy the whole book they can, if they know the stories, preach from the *Prohemium* itself.<sup>6</sup>

This technique of using a "list of contents" or "chapter headings", as M.J. Carruthers has observed, was also adapted to work with schematic memory images:

. . . *images rerum* can act as compositional sites and associational cues that can "gather in" much related material laid down elsewhere in memory, because they invite the orator's "eye" to stay and contemplate . . . This function is also distinctly medieval, most likely developed in monastic meditational practices . . . This also helps to

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<sup>6</sup> *The Mirour of Mans Saluacioun*, edited by Avril Henry (Aldershot, 1986), p. 227.

explain the curious nature of a medieval diagram; rarely is it a diagram *of something*, as ours are. Rather, it requires one to stay and ponder, to fill in missing connections, to add to the material which it presents. It is a meditational artifact, an *imago rerum*, and not primarily informational in its usefulness.<sup>7</sup>

In a number of Middle English compilations the *imago rerum* or paradigmatic image is employed as a "compositional site" which functions both as a "preview" or a "building plan" of the main text which follows, and which, after the text has been "read" or "digested", could also serve as a memory image ("meditational artifact") or mnemonic aid.

For example, in the *Orcherd of Syon*-- a fifteenth-century Middle English translation of *The Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Siena-- the translator arranges the divisions of chapters and sub-sections within the metaphorical framework of an "orchard". In his prologue, the translator equates the reading of his translation with the experience of walking through a well laid out orchard and tasting various fruits from the thirty-five different "aleys" --rows of trees or "chapitres":

Therefore, religiouse sustren, in þis goostli orcherd at  
resonable tyme ordeyned, I wole þat ȝe disporte ȝou & walke  
aboute where ȝe wolen wip ȝoure mynde & resoun, in what

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<sup>7</sup> M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 150.

aleye 3ou lyke, [and] namely here 3e sauouren best, as 3e  
ben disposid. 3e mowe chese if 3e wole of XXXV aleys.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the schematic beast and tree images in the *Book of Vices and Virtues*, the orchard metaphor in the *Orchard of Syon* is not extended throughout the main text, instead the metaphor is employed exclusively within the prologue to elucidate the way in which the compiler "composed" the work, and of the way in which he anticipates his audience will "read" it. In the case of the latter, the compiler's instructions that the book should be approached in a "playful" manner, according to how the reader is "disposid", suggests that initially the rhetorical effect of the book depends upon the availability within the whole of the "orchard" (book), of "fruits" (chapters) which match the mood or "affeccioun" of the particular reader. The rhetorical principle of *decorum* (the "mode" must match the "objective") is served by compiler's invitation to the reader to first range freely over the entire book according to her disposition or "affeccioun"—choosing and tasting from its "copiousness."

However, the compiler makes it clear that following the initial sampling of the orchard, the reader should go on to "chewe" thoroughly what he has already tasted:

My counceill is clerely to assaye & serche þe hool orcherd,  
and taste of sich fruyt and herbis resonably aftir 3oure

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<sup>3</sup> *The Orchard of Syon*, edited by Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, OS 258, vol. I, E.E.T.S. (London, 1966), p. 1: 20-25.

affeccioun, & what you likep best, aftirward chewe it wel &  
ete perof for heelp of youre soule (p. 1: 26-29).

As M.J. Carruthers has observed, the metaphor of "eating" the parts of a book refers specifically to the transfer of the text from the material page to the actual mind and life of the reader.<sup>9</sup> Hugh of St. Victor-- also using the metaphor of the "wood" (*silva*)-- describes how by "walking" through Scripture we may pick its fruit (*sententia*) and "chew" (*ruminamus*) them through reading and "considering them".<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Gregory the Great states that "we ought to transform what we read into our very selves, so that when our mind is stirred by what it hears, our life may concur by practicing what has been heard".<sup>11</sup> This "transformation" of written material "into our very selves" presumes that the reader will train his memory to "re-present" the memory likenesses (with their emotive *intentiones*) which, in turn, will cause the mind to be "stirred by what it hears".

This same concept of "recollection" or "re-presentation" surfaces in the prologue to the *Orchard of Syon* when the compiler encourages his reader to "taste" of the "fruyt and herbis" and "aftirward" to "chewe it wel & ete ~~perof~~ thereof". At first reading the exhortation to "chewe" the fruit suggests that the compiler wants his readers merely to "eat" more of the fruit (the book), but as Hugh's use of the term *ruminatio*

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<sup>9</sup> M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 164-165.

<sup>10</sup> *Didascalicon*, V, 5 (cited by M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 165).

<sup>11</sup> *Moralia in Job*, PL 75: 542 (cited by M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 164).

suggests, the probable literal meaning of the term "chewe" is to "chew the cud", a meaning which suggests that the compiler intends his readers to ruminate, "re-chew" or "re-present" the chosen parts of the book as memory likenesses.<sup>12</sup> In other words, after having tasted from the *Orchard of Syon*, the reader should commit what she has "tasted" to memory-- that is, ruminate or regurgitate its *imagines*.

In addition to explaining how the reader is to approach and ruminate upon the book, the orchard metaphor also serves to make explicit-- in a way few other Middle English religious compilations do-- the uniquely medieval equation between the compiler's actual "making" or composition of the book, and the reader's "regurgitation" or "re-making" of it into a *habitus* of the moral life. As I have suggested, the rhetorical principle of *decorum* has its moral counterpart in the ethical fashioning or "adapting" of the individual (the exercise of "prudence") to "match" the "end" (*finis*) of moral perfection, in turn, the exercise of "prudence"-- just as the exercise of rhetorical *decorum*-- requires a "copious" memory (see above, pp. 76-77). As we have seen, the "chewing" or "recollection" of the book effects an actual change in the moral character of the reader. Thus, in a sense, the translator of the *Orchard of Syon* would view the use of the book not as a single act in time, but as a continual, "ever-present" re-writing or "re-imprinting" of the book as it was memorized by readers.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>13</sup> The "re-writing" of the book in the mind of the reader would not be fully extensive with the book as a whole, since-- as the compiler advises-- the reader should choose only those chapters or "fruits" which meet her mood or "affeccioun", a practice which clearly illustrates the principle of rhetorical *decorum*, ie. the "occasionalizing of the norm" or the "matching of the mode to meet the objective"-- a principle which



This notion is well illustrated in the compiler's rather odd habit, in the prologue, of speaking to his audience as though they are present prior to the actual writing of the book. He makes it clear that he has already-- in the past-- collected together ("founde and gaderid") the trees which he is going to plant, but, he says, he is not sure he will be able-- in the future-- to plant what he has collected. Therefore, he asks his audience to pray for him that he might "performe" the planting of the "goostly orchard":

Lo, sustren, I haue schewid you what ympis & trees I haue  
 founde and gaderid to plaunte & to sette in youre goostly  
 orcherd . . . But, sustren, þous my herbis be gaderid, zit a  
 tyme I must haue of setting and of plantynge sometyme amonge  
 in my tyme of pleinge. Grete laborer was I neuer, bodili ne  
 gostli. I had neuer grete strengþe myztli to laboure wip  
 spade ne wip schouel. Þerfore now, deuoute sustern, helpeþ  
 me wip preiers, for me lackip kunnyng, azens my grete  
 febelnes . . . Wip þis laboure I charge you not but as youre  
 charite stirip you. Wip þat vertu helpeþ me forþe, for  
 hastily I go to laboure, in purpos to performe þis gostli  
 orchard . . . (p. 16: 1-26).

Obviously, the audience to whom the prologue is addressed would-- at the time they read the prologue-- have the entire book in hand. However, in view of the process of ethical reading and rumination ("representation") described above, it is likely that the translator is

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takes account of the *affectus*.

referring to his understanding of the "writing" of a book as a "never-ending" process, a perspective of literary composition which largely erases the modern distinction between "reading" and "writing", since the "writer" is in a constant dialogue (via his "words") with his readers.<sup>14</sup> Having "founde and gaderid" the trees which he will plant into a "kalendar" or "plan" of how the orchard will be laid out (the "central image" of the work or what we would understand to be a "table of contents") the translator must then engage in the "dialogue" between himself and his readers-- that is, he must "write" the book.

The reason, I think, he finds this task so daunting is that he, himself, is in the midst of a learning "dialogue" with the source which he is translating-- that is, Catherine of Siena's *Dialogues*. This possibility is suggested in the curious use of the terms "pleienge" and "recreacion" to refer to the process of ethical reading. The translator makes it clear that although he has collected the "kalendar" (central-image or "plan") for his proposed orchard, he needs "a tyme" in which to plant the orchard within his own "tyme of pleienge" or, as the manuscript version MS. C 25 of St. John's College Cambridge puts it, his "tyme" of "recreacyons to the *parfeccyon of my spryte*:

zit a tyme I must haue of settynge and of plantynge sometyme  
amonge in my tyme of pleienge [recreacyons to the *parfeccyon*  
of my *spryte*] (p. 16: 15-17).

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<sup>14</sup> See M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 169: "Reading a book extends the process whereby one memory engages another in a continuing dialogue that approaches Plato's ideal (expressed in *Phaedrus*) of two living minds engaged in learning . . . Isidore of Seville . . . says that written letters recall through the windows of our eyes the voices of those who are not present to us."

The variant wording of the St. John's manuscript suggests, I think, that the translator is hesitant to write a book which he has not yet finished digesting as part of his own "experience", i.e. trained memory or *habitus*. The translator's apology that he "~~lakip~~ kunnyng" refers ostensibly to a lack of religious knowledge, but this failure to master or "learn by heart" the Christian truths presented in his source also implies a deficiency of moral character. As Judith Shaw has observed, the term "kun" was used to refer not only to the intellectual mastery of doctrine, but also to its practice:

The word "kun" is used more generally in the manuals to describe the hoped-for effect of the Church's program of education on the laity . . . the author of the *Speculum Christiani* . . . equates "~~unkun~~yng" with vice and learning with virtue: "Vnkynynge es moder of erroures and noryscher of vices".<sup>15</sup>

The translator's reference to his personal "unkunynge" suggests that the "help" which he requests from his readers is to be directed as much to his "recreations to the perfection of his soul", as it is to the writing of the book-- or perhaps they were, for him, essentially the same process.

Returning to the *Book of Vices and Virtues* we can see that the central or paradigmatic beast image functions much like the "kalendar"

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<sup>15</sup> Judith Shaw, "The Influence of Canonical and Episcopal Reform on Popular Books of Instruction" in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, edited by T.J. Heffernan (Knoxville, Tenn. 1985), 55-60 (pp. 54-55).

or plan found in the prologue to the *Orcherd of Syon*. Before the reader encounters the main text-- that part of the work which the translator of the *Orcherd of Syon* refers to as the actual "planting" of the orchard-- he is offered the "plan" or paradigmatic image which serves especially as a mnemonic device for the future "chewing of the cud" (recollection) of the text in the memory as a virtuous *habitus*. However, the mnemonic function of the beast image means that it does not, of itself, entirely contain the extended *divisio* of the sins. It serves as a prompt for the reader, a "compositional site" upon which must be "re-constructed"-- as part of the trained memory-- a "re-collection" of the book-- In other words, much as the "table of contents" of the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* or "kalendar" of the *Orcherd of Syon* could be used as "compositional sites" for the recollection of their main texts, or even memorized in their own right.

In the *Book of Vices and Virtues*, the function of the beast image as a paradigmatic image or *imago rerum* is made explicit in the picture of the beast image which accompanies the text. This picture, rather than supplying didactic information, clearly is intended to work as a "meditational artifact" which, when contemplated, could aid the reader in recollecting the more extended "informational" content of the main text. However, the beast image (as an *imago rerum*) is joined organically to the main text which follows by the technique of merging the "heads" of the beast with the "branches" of the seven deadly sins. Thus, although we leave behind the beast image in order to read the "informational" main text, as a "meditational artifact" the beast image remains a constituent part of what will be an elaborately "anatomized" figural *res*.

The compiler-- utilizing a pun on the word head-- suggests that these seven "heued vices" are the sources or "heuedes" of "alle eueles" and may therefore be "departed in many manere of wises":

Of þese seuene heuedes comen alle manere of synnes, and  
þerfore þei ben y-cleped heued vices, for þei ben heuedes of  
alle eueles and of alle synnes, be þey dedly or veniale.  
And þerfore eueriche of þes seuene is departed in many  
manere of wises (p. 11: 8-13).

In order to further elaborate each of the "seven heuedes", the compiler shifts to the tree image (the trees grow out of the seven heads), an image more congenial to a lengthy *divisio* and to the representation of the actual development of sin in the life:

þis synne [pride] is deuised and y-sprad in so many maneres .  
and so fele parties þat vnneþe may any man noumbre hem. But  
napeles þer bep seuene principal braunches, þat bep in  
seuene maneres y-schewed, þat comeþ out of a wikkid roote  
(p. 12: 23-27).

The introduction of the tree image marks the beginning of the main text, and may also have had a traditional precedent which complemented its practical function as a device appropriate to the art of *divisio*. E.W. Tristram has noted several wall-paintings of the seven vices that depict a "Tree of Evil" emerging from the "gaping jaws of the Leviathan". Furthermore, this variation of the tree image shows the seven heads of

the beast growing from the tree as fruit signifying the seven deadly sins.<sup>18</sup>

In amalgamating these two images of sin-- the beast and the "Tree of Evil"-- the compiler appears to be making an attempt to preserve and extend the pictorial aspect of the initial beast image. The reference to the "evil root" from which the tree of sin grows, corresponds with the Leviathan root depicted in the wall-painting. Furthermore, the compiler consistently introduces each of the seven vices or "branches" as a "heued", thus effectively returning the audience to the paradigmatic beast image (stored in the memory) and its heads from which each vice grows almost as a tree in its own right. However, the mnemonic image of the beast easily recedes into the background as the compiler, employing the technique familiar to preachers as the *divisio*, branches out from the next "heued" with the next tree image into a series of complex and rather disparate aspects of the vice concerned. In terms of its effect upon the reader, the extended *divisio* of the vices or the virtues rather than being "seen" (as with the "meditational" beast image) is "read".

There is a sort of loop-stitch effect as the reader moves repeatedly outwards from the paradigmatic beast image through the various extensions of the "braunches" of each vice-- in the case of pride the seven branches are further divided into various "many smale twigges" (p. 13: 1-2)-- and then finally back to the beast, the next head and yet another tree. This manner of proceeding through the text means that the

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<sup>18</sup> E.W. Tristram, *English Wall Painting of The Fourteenth Century* (London, 1955), p. 102.



beast image remains central to the extended *divisio* of each vice (as a "meditational artifact") and both unifies and organizes what would otherwise be a series of separate chapters or discourses.

A similar effect may be observed in the way in which Chaucer links together (compiles) the various stories in his *Canterbury Tales*. The paradigmatic, containing image or frame of the *Tales* is, of course, the pilgrimage to Canterbury. However, while all the tales show some link or connection to the narrative frame of the journey, they are not-- as a series of events within the journey-- always connected with one another in such a way that we can claim any certainty as to their chronological order. As Roger Ellis has noted:

Difficulty attends stories like that of the Man of Law, Clerk, Manciple and Parson. These are clearly linked at their outset to the frame, but have only a notional connection with the preceeding story, either because it is unfinished or because it ends without clear reference to the frame. By virtue of their narrative head-links, we can read such stories without difficulty as episodes in the Canterbury book: yet the absence of end-links for the preceeding stories makes for a sense of fragmentariness, or a grinding of narrative gears, as we jerk out of one story into another by way of an unspecified moment in the pilgrimage narrative.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Roger Ellis, *Patterns of Religious Narrative in the Canterbury Tales* (London, 1986), p. 5.

That the uncertain order of the *Tales* within the "containing" pilgrimage frame may have had a rhetorical function is supported, I believe, by Chaucer's recommendation that sensitive readers select only those tales which they find appealing, a strategy which, as we have seen in the case of the *Orcherd of Syon*, encourages the reader to select those tales which match their personal disposition (see above p. 94).<sup>18</sup>

The same possibility may also apply to the way in the main text that each of the seven vices is initially connected with the central beast image, but is not linked directly with either the vice which precedes or follows it. This is illustrated by the following two extracts where we can see the absence of any link between the conclusion of the treatment of "pride" and the vice which follows it. Instead, the vice of "envy" is introduced with a return to the paradigmatic beast image:

þe seuenþe braunche of pride is foly drede . . . þis drede  
and schame comeþ of an euele likynge þat a mean wole plese a  
schrewe, and þerfore sche is douster to pride & þe seuenþe  
principal braunche . . .

þe secounde heued of þe wikked best of helle is enuye, þat  
is þe addre þat al enuenimeþ . . . Þis synne is departed in  
þre principal braunches . . . (p. 22: 3-22).

This approach to reading the *Vices and Virtues* would not mean that the various vices would become a series of completely separate sermons or

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<sup>18</sup> *The Riverside Chaucer*: " . . . whoso list it [the Miller's Tale] nat yheere,/ Turne over the leef and chese another tale;/ For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,/ Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,/ And eek moralitee and hoolynesse" (I: 3176-80).

tracts, since the head-link which introduces each vice and its *divisio* ensures that the central and unifying beast image is recalled as the next vice is introduced. The absence of direct links between vices, however, allows the reader to stop with the completed *divisio* of any one vice without dismembering the unity between vices. Thus, having read and mentally pictured the initial beast image, the reader could then approach the remainder of the text as a series of topical *divisiones* to be read and digested one-at-a-time perhaps over a period of several days.<sup>19</sup> Such a reading strategy would prevent the dismemberment of the memory image, since the *divisio* of a single vice would not necessarily over-extend the tree image or, to use Albert the Great's phrase, "distend" the memory.

The second paradigmatic memory image, the garden of man's soul, functions in much the same way as the beast image except that it has a more elaborate structure necessitated by the numerous doctrinal elements which together help support the seven remedial virtues. As with the beast image, the textual garden image is paralleled by an actual picture

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<sup>19</sup> Morton W. Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, N.J. 1962), pp. 31-32, in a description of the structure of *Piers Plowman*, refers to the loop-stitch effect of the Biblical commentary, an aspect he sees as central to the way in which Langland's allegory proceeds: "There is a lack of progression within the commentary, for the progression is in the work commented on-- that is, extrinsic to itself. It expands from a fixed point-- the lemma, the phrase, sentence, or sentences which are to form the exegetical unit-- and then returns to the next fixed point outside itself in the work being explained. There is no necessary connection *within the commentary* between one comment and the next, although there often may be one." The same general principle also applies to the *Vices and Virtues* with the difference that instead of a "lemma", "phrase", "sentence" etc., the "fixed point" to which the commentary repeatedly returns is the schematic or anatomized beast image. This development suggests, I think, the important role of the "third-type" of *distinctio* which, when anatomized into its constituent parts, could effectively replace the Scriptural passage as the point of departure or "fixed point" from which a main text would expand.

of the *imago rerum* or paradigmatic image. However, this second paradigmatic image-- like the beast image-- functions as a "compositional site" which, rather than actually depicting all the various doctrinal elements which follow in the main text, serves as a "meditational artifact". The garden image and its accompanying picture serve as "fixed points" or "lemmata" from which the entire main text proceeds.

Before going on to assess the way in which the sacrament of penance is represented in the *Vices and Virtues*, it will be helpful to consider briefly the arrangement of various doctrinal groups and elements within the garden image according to the relations of cause and effect. The causal linking of doctrinal elements or groups stands, I believe, as one of the unique contributions of the anatomized figural *res* (as *compilatio*) towards the dissemination and re-organization of pre-existent doctrinal materials.

The compiler, rather than inventing new topics (*materia*), worked to synthesize often disparate groups of doctrine, authoritative commentary, scriptural texts and figures.<sup>20</sup> However, as Stephen of Bourbon's *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus* (1261) appears to demonstrate, the compiler could employ organizing devices which-- in the process of synthesizing their diverse materials-- might also further develop the theoretical aspect of the subjects:

The *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus* . . . is elaborately hierarchical in structure. The Seven Gifts of

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<sup>20</sup> A.J. Minnis, *Theory of Authorship*, p. 156.

the Holy Ghost provide the basis of the division of material. Each of the seven books is then subdivided by *tituli* which indicate the different topics (*materiae*), and each *materia* is subdivided on the principle of "cause and effect".<sup>21</sup>

The principle of cause and effect allows the compiler not only to organize doctrine, but to integrate it so that the reader becomes aware of how various elements in the Christian faith (such as penance, the *Pater noster*, the remedial virtues, etc.) may be understood in their "real life" causal relations. This contribution accords well with the teaching function of the *compilatio*, since to describe doctrine according to the principle of cause and effect presents truth as something which is to be understood in terms of its relation to human experience. Furthermore, as we shall see with regards to the representation of penance, the schematic image may embody the cause and effect principle in order to integrate the forensic and remedial functions of penance.

The compiler introduces the garden image with an appeal to the reader of the text to not only gain a knowledge of the good, but also to do it:

So þat euery man or womman þat wole studie and rede þis boke  
mowe ordeyne his lif by vertues and goode dedes, for elles  
it were litel worþ for a man or a womman to kunne good, but  
he dide good (p. 92: 27-31).

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

The use of the word "ordeyne" to describe the reformation of the reader's life suggests, again, the symbiotic relationship between "making" a book-- that is, constructing a book according to a particular "order of treatment" or *ordinatio*, and "re-presenting" that same book or *ordinatio* as a mnemonic *habitus* "imprinted" upon the mind (see above pp. 83-84). As A.J. Minnis explains, the literary *ordinatio* was a rhetorical ordering or "disposition and arrangement of material to an end or objective (*finis*)."<sup>22</sup> The rhetorical effect of the literary *ordinatio* would initially be that of moving the *affectus* towards the "end" of piety or virtue, an effect which, as the text was memorized, would be repeated as the *intentiones* (affective responses) contained by the memory images (*imagines*) would be repeatedly experienced (see above p. 85). This process would, in turn, lead to a "disposition and arrangement" or *ordinatio* of the moral life or *habitus* of the individual, a development which would "ordeyne" the reader according to the "end" of virtue and finally eternal life (see above p. 86, note 81). J.B. Allen has lucidly explained the vital mnemonic and ethical function of the image and the *exemplum* in his observation that, "the constitution of the text- and the re-constitution of the text which is every reader's experience of it- is precisely the *moral* experience of the pilgrim".<sup>23</sup>

This close association between "ordeyning" a book, recollecting it, and reforming the moral life is fully supported in the use of the garden image as a figure of the development of the virtuous soul. Instead of

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<sup>22</sup> A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> Judson Boyce Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages: A decorum of convenient distinction* (Toronto, 1982), p. 251.



merely "standing for" the didactic message of the main text, the garden image has the vital function of becoming an mental *imago* or *phantasm* which, if "recollected" and established as part of a trained memory, would be "imprinted" upon the mind as the *habitus* necessary to the exercise of prudence. The point is simply this, the process of "ethical reading" did not involve, at any stage, a complete "abstraction" of the didactic message of the image from its physical "imprint" upon the mind. Indeed, as Albert the Great makes clear, these *imagines* were necessary if the understanding of the didactic precepts was to produce a virtuous life:

Although literal words make for more accuracy about the thing itself nevertheless the metaphors *move* the mind more and thus convey more to the memory.<sup>24</sup>

The "imprint" of the garden image upon the memory as the condition necessary to the "actualization" of virtue in the life adds a new significance to the analogy which the compiler of *Vices and Virtues* makes between the garden and the soul of man:

Holy writ liknep a good man and a good womman to a fair garden ful of grene and of faire trees and of good fruyt . . . For in þat garden graffede the grete gardener, þat is God þe fadre, whan he makeþ the herte nesche and swete and esy as wex tempred, and good erþe al redy and worpy to be sett and grafed wiþ goode graffes. Þes graffes ben þe vertues þat þe Holy Gost gyueth of grace . . . Þes þinges doþ þe

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<sup>24</sup> Cited by M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 279.

Holy Gost to þe herte and makeþ it wexe al grene and bere  
flour and fruyt, and he makeþ it as a paradis rist  
delitable, ful of goode trees and precious (pp. 92-93: 34  
and 1-20).

Conspicuous in the above passage are the references to God's work in preparing the "herte" to receive the "graffes" of the virtues. The receptive heart is described as both "esy as wax tempred" and as "erthe" prepared "to be sett and grafed". As M.J. Carruthers has observed, the "seal-in-wax" analogy was used consistently in the Middle Ages to refer to the "impress" or "stamp" of truth upon both the tissue of the mind (memory) and the moral character:

The "dicta et facta memorabilia", exemplary deeds and words of others impressed into our memories like a seal into wax, shape our moral life in shaping our memories. One can recognize in this trope [seal-in-wax] how thoroughly embedded in the neuropsychology of memory ethical action was considered to be, and how in stamping the material of the brain with both a "likeness" of sensory experience and a personal, "gut" response to it, a memory phantasm also shaped the soul and judgment.<sup>25</sup>

The description of God as the "grete gardener" who makes the earth "redy and worthy to be sett and grafed" also recalls the translator of the *Orcherd of Syon* whose references to the "settynge" and "plantynge" of

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<sup>25</sup> M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 71.

the "gostly orchard" fall within the context of "kunynge" the book as part of the moral character (see above pp. 96-98).

The explicit reference to doing good in the *Vices and Virtues* is extended throughout the discussion of the seven virtues as each of the related doctrinal elements-- the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven Beatitudes, and the seven parts of the *Pater noster*-- are not only listed, but are also integrated within the frame-work of the human soul (the garden) and its spiritual movements.

From a stylistic point of view the passage quoted above is notable for the way in which it describes the process whereby the heart of man becomes increasingly more verdant and fruitful under the hand of the "grete gardener". With the growth of the virtues, the description of the garden changes from that of a "fair garden ful of grene and of faire trees and of good fruyt" to "a paradis rixt delitable, ful of goode trees and precious". Since there is no basis for judging these two descriptive phrases as qualitatively different-- both descriptions are figures of the "good man and good womman"-- the use of the word "paradis" in the second description appears to have the function of smoothing the transition from the soul of man made virtuous, to the soul of man as the frame for the extended Incarnation:

And he makeþ it [the garden] as a paradis . . . But rixt as God sett erpeli paradis ful of goode trees and fruyt, and in þe myddel sett þe tree of lif, . . . Rixt so doþ gostly to þe herte þe goode gardyner, þat is God þe fadre, for he sett þe tree of vertue and in þe myddel þe tree of lif, þat

is Ihesu Crist, for he sieþ in þe gospel, "Who-so eteþ my flesch and drynkeþ my blod haþ lif wiþ-out ende (p. 93: 19-30).

With the addition of the word "paradis" to the concluding description of the garden image, the compiler swiftly expands the initial image from that of the enclosed garden (taken from the "Songs of Solomon") to that of the "ertheli paradis" or garden of Eden as described in Genesis. This development suggests a sophisticated selection of Scriptural texts which, as they are welded together to form a figural *ordinatio*, depict the causal progression of the human soul towards virtue and eternal life without "over-expanding" the paradigmatic structure of the garden image.<sup>26</sup>

The combining of the two Scriptural gardens-- the enclosed garden of the Song of Solomon and the garden of Eden-- introduces the reader to

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<sup>26</sup> A.J. Minnis, *The Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 146-147 describes the two sorts of order identified by Aquinas in his commentary on Aristotle's *Ethica*: "One kind of order is that which the parts of a whole have among themselves. For example, the parts of a house are mutually ordered to each other. Another kind of order is that of things to an end. Aquinas explains that this order is of greater importance than the first because, as Aristotle says in the eleventh book of the *Metaphysica*, the order of the parts of an army among themselves exists because of the order of the whole army to the commander." Minnis goes on to apply these notions of ordering to literary *ordinatio*. I would suggest that in addition to their general application to literary *ordinatio*, these two sorts of order have a more specific application to the "figural" *ordinatio* of the *Book of Vices and Virtues* where the garden image embodies both the first way of ordering, "the parts of a whole among themselves", and the second type, the ordering of things "to an end". The first way of ordering can be seen in the arrangement of the "parts" of the garden (trees, streams, well, etc.), the second way of ordering emerges in the bringing together of various doctrinal groups-- via the order of the physical garden-- so that as parts of the garden they function together towards the "end" of moral virtue and salvation.

the "tree of lif" which God "gostly" sets in the middle of the heart, apparently in order to cross-fertilize the other "trees of vertue":

Rigt so doþ gostly to þe herte þe goode gardyner, þat is God  
þe fadre, for he sett þe tree of vertue and in þe myddel þe  
tree of lif, þat is Ihesu Crist, for he seip in þe gospel,  
"Who-so eteþ my flesch and drynkeþ my blod hap lif wip-out  
ende." Þis tree wexeth grene and fair bi vertue ouer al þis  
paradis, and bi vertue of þis tree wexen, blowen and beren  
fruyzt alle þe opere trees (93: 25-33).

The central tree of life is schematized in detail to figure Christ and various aspects of his life. The equation of Christ with the tree of life is forwarded in view of the joint life-giving properties of the paradisaical tree and the body of Christ. The tree of life, when set "gostly" within the enclosed garden of man's soul, represents the reception-- through the Eucharist-- of Christ within the inner man.<sup>27</sup>

With the schematization of the branches of the tree of life (the fruit of the tree represents the twelve apostles), the writer again

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<sup>27</sup> The term "gostly" applies in this instance to the "unseen" work of God via the Holy Spirit upon the heart. The compiler also speaks of the "pore in herte" as the "gostly pore" (p. 94: 32), a use of the term which suggests, I think, a connection between "gostly", the "heart", and the "memory". As M.J. Carruthers states: "Memory as 'heart' was encoded in the common Latin verb *recordari*, meaning 'to recollect' (*The Book of Memory*, p. 49). The use of the term "goostly" in the prologue to the *Orchard of Syon* (p. 16:1-25) applies to "goostly recreacioun", "goostly affeccioun", and "goostly cumfort", terms which all refer to the "heart-feeling" or emotional disposition of the translator and his audience. However, the "orchard" itself is also referred to as a "goostly orchard", a description which, in addition to suggesting the nexus of meaning between the term "gostly", the "heart", and the "memory", also underlines the affective and, indeed, spiritual power of the memory image.

effects an organic expansion of the central image-- this time in order to include the Beatitudes which, as Rosemond Tuve explains, speak of the seven remedial virtues.<sup>28</sup> The writer then returns to the tree of life in order further to elaborate upon the various aspects included within the garden-image. The seven trees of virtue are watered by seven streams which signify the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and seven maidens-- the seven petitions of the *Pater noster*-- apply the water to the seven trees of virtue (see above p. 6).

Given the causal relations which the writer shows between the doctrinal groups (petitions, gifts, and virtues) within the garden image, it is not surprising that in the main text that follows the paradigmatic garden image, the detailed descriptions of each of the seven petitions also include brief references to their respective seven gifts and that, interwoven within the description of each gift, may be found its appropriate virtue. In other words, having depicted *breviter et summatim* these groups of doctrine as constituent parts of the garden image, the writer is careful in the main text to elaborate not only in terms of additional information concerning the doctrinal elements (from a pictorial point of view an extension of the spatial frame of the garden image), but also in terms of describing further the causal links between the doctrinal groups, emphasizing a knowledge of the cause and effect interaction of the various doctrinal elements. For example, in the following extract, the discussion of the gift of strength refers first to the beatitude, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness", and then identifies the virtue of "prowesse" as both a necessary corollary and external manifestation of the gift of strength:

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<sup>28</sup> R. Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*, p. 87.



Whan God geueþ to a man þat grace and þilke gifte þat men  
 clepen þe gifte of strenkþe, he geueþ a newe herte, a noble  
 herte and hardy-- noble to dispise al þat þe world may  
 bihote and geue, and of þis hardynesse spekep oure lord whan  
 he seip, "Blessed be þei þat han hunger and þrist of  
 ristwisnesse" . . . Þis desire whan it is verailliche in  
 herte it bihouep þat it schewe in dede, for as Salamon seip,  
 "No man may hyde fier in his bosom þat he ne schal brenne  
 his cloþes." Þis schewynge may not be wip-out vertue and  
 prowesse . . . and þat is þe ferþ vertue þat þe Holy Gost  
 geueþ to a man or a womman, for to be dousty and ristful  
 ouer al (pp. 162-163: 15-32 and 1-21).

If we return again to the central or paradigmatic garden image it will be observed that only the life-giving nutritive function of these powers is depicted, since in the garden image the trees of virtue have already displaced the trees of vice. However, as part of the main text, it remains for the writer to describe the first stage of the process implied by the central garden image-- that is, the fight or battle between the "reader" and the vices. We may ask why the compiler chose to introduce this important "first stage" in the process of spiritual reform only after he had depicted what would, in real terms, be the later, paradisaal scene. It is possible that in choosing this arrangement, the compiler had in mind the clear distinction between the vices and virtues as mutually exclusive states within the soul. Furthermore, there would also be the technical problem of depicting trees of virtue at war with their respective vice counter-parts. In addition, the apparently reverse order of treatment could also be

interpreted as suggesting the fine line that separated the "good man and . . . good womman" of the garden image from the man or woman still in the process of fighting-- with the aid of the Holy Spirit-- the stubborn trees of vice. This possibility is supported by the way in which the writer-- while still discussing the gifts and virtues-- moves back and forth between the metaphors of trees/branches and battles/armor in his discussion of the virtue of "prowesse". There is a sense in which the central garden image with its serene trees, well, streams, and maidens must also be understood as a potential scene of conflict as part of the continuous battle with sin. The apparently dual nature of the virtue of "prowesse" as both branches and battles is evident in the following extract where the figure of the Christian knight is introduced:

In þis tree as in þe oper we fynden seuene bowes, for in  
seuene maneres þe vertue and þe dougtynesse of þe good knyȝt  
of oure lord schewep, for bi seuene manere of batailes he  
comeþ to seuene manere victories . . . Of þe first  
braunche and þe first bataille (p. 170: 7-34).

The sacrament of penance is identified as both the first branch of the tree of "prowesse" and as the armor of the Christian knight. The dual reference to branch and battle sets "prowesse" apart as a virtue which, in the words of the writer, "is of so gret worþinesse ~~þat~~ amonges alle ~~opere~~ vertues sche alon bi her-self bereþ ~~þe~~ name of vertue" (p. 163: 23-25). Thus there is a sense in which this virtue and its branches/battles underpin all the other virtues, since it actively engages all the deadly sins. The central garden image still remains primary, but the battle imagery temporarily takes precedence over the

branches of "prowesse" as the writer focuses upon the series of battles which must be fought before the Christian may eat of the tree of life. The return to the "tre of lif" at the conclusion of the seventh battle again refers the reader to the central garden image (identifying it with Christ as before) but with this reference there is an emphasis upon the tree of life or Christ as the sustainer not of the virtues, but of eternal life in the "blisse of paradis". In other words, having fought successfully the seven battles against sin, the Christian receives eternal life, a fact represented in *Vices and Virtues* by the transformation of the figural garden image of the soul into the actual, heavenly paradise.

And who-so venquiseþ þis bataile, he wyneþ þe mede þat  
seynt Iohn spekeþ of þere þat oure lord [seip] in þe  
Apocalips, "To hym þat venquiseþ I wole geue hym to ete of  
þe tree of lif þat is a-myddes paradis," þat is Ihesu Crist  
. . . þis is þe ende and þe parfigtnesse of þis vertue þat  
is cleped prowesse, þat is properliche an Englissche  
dougtnesse, and þer-to ledeþ vs þe gifte of strenkþe (pp.  
187-188: 30-31 and 1-14).

As the crucial doctrinal element in the first battle, penance is also the act which effectively displaces the seven vices. This fact is presented in the accompanying picture where the Christian knight--replete with the armor of penance-- is seen fighting the seven vices represented by the beast of the Apocalypse. The armor of the knight is divided into the three elements of penance, "repentaunce in herte", "schrifte of mouth", and "amendes in dede doynge":

Now schalt þou wite ȝif a man be wel armed to ouercome a bataile, þat is to seye to venquise parfigtliche synne, hym bihouep haue þre þinges þat ben verailiche in penaunce. Þe first þing is repentaunce in herte. Þe secunde schrifte of moup. Þe þridde is sufficiant amendes in dede doynges. And whan on of þes þre þinges failen, þe armure is fals . . . (p. 171: 22-28).

There is nothing remarkable, per se, in the description of the sacrament of penance which makes up the first branch/battle against sin. Again, the content of the section reflects the authoritative Latin penitential manuals. The fundamental difference, in this instance, between the traditional source text(s) and the derivative compilation lies in the use of the schematic image/metaphor as an organizing structure which demonstrates the cause and effect principle. As with the integration of branch ("prowesse") and battle (penance), the compiler further emphasizes the ethical function of penance by making it but one of seven battles, which together make up a causal ordering of the process that leads to salvation. As part of this order or *ordinatio*, the sacrament of penance is defined, not in isolation, but as the first battle in a series of battles, all of which cohere in terms of cause and effect and which must be fought before the penitent may be saved.

The compiler of the *Vices and Virtues* differentiates between the forensic function of the sacrament of penance and its remedial or ethical function by dividing the operations of penance between the first two battles/branches which the Knight wages against sin: the first

battle overcomes the second death (the sacrament's forensic function), the second battle is the inner struggle to reform the life (the remedial function):

þe first dep of þe soule is þe dep of synne, þat men  
ouercomen wiþ penaunce, wher-by men ascapeþ the secunde dep,  
þat is þe dep of helle, þat may neuere-more dye. þis is þe  
first braunche of þe tree of douztynesse: for to ouercome  
suche a bataile. . . After þis bataile comeþ a-noper. For  
whan a man repenteth hym of his synne, þan mote he begynne to  
wrastle. For þan bigynneþ he to þenke in his herte, "What  
penaunce schal I do? How schal I now lede my lif?" and many  
ben þat in þis bataile ben recreant (p. 184: 13-23).

As the compiler indicates, the works of satisfaction (penance) were easily neglected once the penitent was assured of absolution and escape from the second death. It should be noted that the second battle is not the actual performance of the works of satisfaction, but rather the struggle to decide or purpose whether or not to conscientiously do them at all. This sort of decision-making process was not a formal stage in the sacrament of penance, yet given the pedagogical goals of the compiler, explicit elaboration upon the psychological dimension of the doctrine of penance helps ensure that the reader will understand the ethical function of penance as essential to salvation. In other words, the pursuit of eternal life must extend beyond absolution, to the struggle of doing the prescribed works of satisfaction in order to avoid the circumstances of deadly sin.

This emphasis is also achieved in the *Vices and Virtues* with the use of the constituent parts of the anatomized or schematic image to integrate penance with other doctrinal elements such as the remedial virtues (branches) and the battles which, together, extend penance beyond the operations of the confessional to the whole of the individual life. I would emphasize that it is the use made of the schematic images as the primary structure of the book-- not any changes made to the actual content of the penitential section-- which determines the strong ethical role of penance in this compilation.

The vital role of the schematic image for showing the causal integration of the remedial and forensic functions of penance, can be seen by comparing the use of the anatomized image as a primary structure in the *Vices and Virtues* with the comparative lack of such structural imagery in the *Parson's Tale*. Critics have suggested Pennaforte's *Summa* and Peraldus's *Summa vitiorum* as the common sources for both the *Parson's Tale* and the *Vices and Virtues*.<sup>29</sup> However, while both the *Parson's Tale* and the *Vices and Virtues* may depend largely upon the same two primary Latin sources, their over-all structures are the inverse of each other. The *Parson's Tale* treats the vices and virtues as sub-sections within the framework of the sacrament of Penance; the *Vices and Virtues* places penance within the over-all framework of the vices and virtues. This difference, rather than merely an example of arbitrary orderings of doctrinal elements, reflects, I believe, the specific pastoral concerns of the compiler of the *Somme le roi* (*Vices and*

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<sup>29</sup> See Siegfried Wenzel, "The Source for the *Remedia* of the *Parson's Tale*", *Traditio*, 27 (1971), 433-453 (p. 433) and M.W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 125.



*Virtues*) that the reader not only understand what is good, but also do it (see above, pp. 106-107). Furthermore, the extended structural imagery of the *Vices and Virtues* (a feature not shared by the *Parson's Tale*) marks an awareness on the part of the compiler of the need to integrate, in causal terms, the various doctrinal groups which make up the Peckham syllabus. I would maintain that both the integration of the remedial and forensic functions of penance and the use of causal links between penance and the remedial virtues, as seen in the *Vices and Virtues*, are lacking in the *Parson's Tale*.

The strength of the over-all structure of *Vices and Virtues* with respect to penance lies in its considered portrayal of the potentially ambiguous relationship between the ethical and forensic functions of the salvation process. This is achieved through the use of the paradigmatic beast and garden images which serve both as mnemonic diagrams of the book and as structuring images which ensure that the various doctrinal groups and their elements are integrated. For example, in the *Vices and Virtues* the sacrament of penance-- although not the primary structure-- assumes a vital role as the armor which the Christian knight must have in order to fight successfully the first battle (or branch) of the virtue of "prowesse" which defeats the vices. In this way penance is understood as the dynamic mechanism which actually makes possible the "displacement" of the vices by the remedial virtues:

Be first bataile pat be cristen man and womman hap is agens  
dedly synne . . . Now schalt pou wite 3if a man be wel armed  
to ouercome a bataile, pat is to seye to venquise

parfiſtliche synne, hym bihouep haue pre pinges pat ben  
verailliche in penaunce (p. 171: 1-25).

The importance of the dynamic function of penance in fighting against the deadly sins becomes obvious when it is contrasted with the *Parson's Tale* in which the virtue of fortitude is not in any specific way linked with penance, and as a result-- although we are given to understand that certain virtues displace their opposite vices-- we are not informed as to how or through what mechanism the change from vice to virtue is to take place:

Agayns this horrible synne of Accidie, and the branches of  
the same, ther is a vertu that is called *fortitudo* or  
strengthe, that is an affecioun thurgh which a man despiseth  
anoyouse thinges. This vertu is so myghty and so vigerous  
that is dar withstonde myghtily and wisely kepen hymself fro  
perils that been wikked, and wrastle agayn the assautes of  
the devel. For it enhaunceth and enforceth the soule,  
right as Accidie abateth it and maketh if fieble.<sup>30</sup>

The function of *fortitudo* as the virtue which fights against "the assautes of the devel" parallels the emphasis in the *Vices and Virtues* upon "prowesse" as the virtue which fights "~~ag~~ens dedly synne". However, in the case of the latter, the fight between "prowesse" or "fortitude" and sin begins with the donning of the armor of the sacrament of penance, a preparatory stage which shows-- in real terms-- how the penitent could obtain the virtue of "prowesse". In other words,

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<sup>30</sup> *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 312: 728-729.

in the *Vices and Virtues* the sacrament of penance, in conjunction with the supplicatory function of the *Pater noster* and the grace of the "gifts", functions as the vital "first step" in the inculcation of virtue and the "displacement" of vice. Essentially the integration of the virtue of "prowesse" (itself the single most necessary virtue of the seven) with the sacrament of penance is effected as the parts of "prowesse" are discussed in their dual role as both "branches" and "battles"-- the use of the "active" metaphor of the battle allowing for the incorporation of penance as the "mechanism" which puts into action the "displacement" of vice.

The failure of the *Parson's Tale* to integrate the sacrament of penance with the remedial virtues-- perhaps as much a feature of the *ordinatio* employed and a result of the lack of integration within the compilation, than the sign of any intentional omission-- reflects the somewhat disparate way in which doctrinal groups are presented in the Peckham syllabus.<sup>31</sup> But perhaps more to the point it calls attention to the danger, inherent to the sacrament of penance, that the forensic function of satisfaction would obscure its remedial, ethical function. As noted in Chapter II, there was a tension or what N.J. Gray refers to as a potential "inconsistency" (inherent to the Latin manuals) between the function of satisfaction as both a payment for the temporal debt of sin, and its function as a remedial or medicinal factor in the healing of the sin and the promulgation of virtue (see above p. 29). In the

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<sup>31</sup> Chaucer uses the tree-image to describe the progress from "contrition" (the "roote") to "confessioun" (the "stalk", "braunches", and "leves"), and finally to "satisfaccioun" (the "fruyt"). However, while this image is introduced early in the tale, and suggests an attempt on Chaucer's part to use it as a central or paradigmatic image (*imago rerum*), its "parts" or "branches" are not extended as structural features of the main text (*The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 289: 111-126).

Latin manuals, while the forensic function was formally preserved, the remedial function was given the primary stress.<sup>32</sup> In short, the penances prescribed by the confessor should, if followed, place the penitent within "circumstances" favourable to the cultivation of the necessary remedial virtues, an understanding of satisfaction which makes clear the necessary connection between penance and the inculcation of virtue in the life.<sup>33</sup>

Given the emphasis in the Latin manuals upon the works of satisfaction as the remedy or medicine for sin (to use the popular metaphor), we should expect a similar emphasis in Chaucer's vernacular derivative. However, in the *Parson's Tale*, while the seven virtues are defined as *remedia*, they are not explicitly linked with works of satisfaction. No mention is given to works of satisfaction as remedies for sin, or as occasions for the growth of the remedial virtues. The discussion-- limited to the three main categories of works of satisfaction; alms, fasting, and prayer-- fails to make clear the role of these penances as remedies against sins, an omission which, I believe, suggests a failure on Chaucer's part fully to recognize the importance attached to the remedial function of works of satisfaction by the Latin manuals.

This lack of a remedial emphasis with respect to satisfaction should not be viewed as a feature typical of vernacular treatments of penance--

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<sup>32</sup> See N.J. Gray, p. 183: "Penance, as Thomas of Chobham clearly points out, are aimed not at paying for past sins, but at amending the sinners life".

<sup>33</sup> See N.J. Gray, p. 182: "The elimination of such so-called occasions of sin was much emphasized by penitential writers as part of the true remedial function of satisfaction".

in other words Chaucer should not excused on the grounds that "it was common practice". Quite the opposite would appear to be the case, since in didactic works such as the *Speculum Sacerdotale* and the *Speculum Christiani*, the works of satisfaction are explicitly identified in their remedial function. As we shall see, this remedial emphasis is again probably more the product of the compilers' impositions of new metaphorical *ordinationes* and *divisiones* on their materials, than it is the product of translators following sources without altering the *forma tractatus*.

The *Speculum Sacerdotale*, a fifteenth-century collection of vernacular sermons, includes a comprehensive penitential tract.<sup>34</sup> Much like Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*, the *Speculum Sacerdotale* does not restructure materials according to a metaphorical or imagistic *ordinatio*. Both confession and satisfaction receive the bulk of treatment, but the importance of the first element of the sacrament of penance is also stressed, especially in the emphasis upon the reciprocal relationship between sorrow for sin and moral reform:

Compunccion of herte is nedeful to a synner, *scilicet*, that he wepe and sorowe for his trespas, and that he be in wille not more for to turne there-to a-yene (p. 63: 10-13).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Speculum Sacerdotale*, edited by Edward H. Weatherly, OS 200, E.E.T.S. (London, 1936), pp. 63-97.

<sup>35</sup> See T.N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession*, p. 105: "Some think of forgiveness primarily in terms of sorrow and a change of life. They are inclined to stress the virtue of penance, and for the literature we are concerned with, the most authoritative voice is that of Raymond of Penaforte, who stands in the contritionist tradition of Peter Lombard. The definition the *Raymundia* selects is as popular as it is simple: Penance is repenting past evils and not committing them again . . . For

The role of contrition in the process of moral reform is buttressed by an equal stress upon the ethical function of doing penance (alms, fasts, prayers) as the necessary precursor to its forensic function in the remission of sin:

And knoweþ well that satisfaccion is made in diuerse maneres: in praying, in goyng on pilgrimage, in herborowyng, in almes dede, in wakyng, in fastyng, and alle these doth hym profitt a-nense God 3if so be that they despise and forsake affeccion and luste of synnyng azeyn. For 3if so be þat they forsake noȝt affeccion and purpos of synnyng, soþely alle the forsayde poyntis of satisfaccion þat he doþ are in vayne and getteþ no remission of synnes (p. 73: 6-13).

This identification of the primary ethical function of satisfaction accords well with the contritionist view that true sorrow for sin will result in sincere attempts at moral reform. However, unlike Mannyng with his cyclical concept of the sacrament of penance (see above, p. 34), the writer of the *Speculum Sacerdotale* does not consider the possible role of satisfaction for leading the penitent back to ~~the~~ a renewing of contrition and a repeat of the entire penitential process. Instead, having repeated the initial two steps leading up to the remission of sins (contrition and confession) the writer emphasizes the function of satisfaction as an on-going discipline of moral reform which must be performed before sins can be remitted:

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these contritionists the best confession is one that leads to a change of life. The work of the penitent is preeminently one of sorrow and reformation."



In the firste thou moste make the clene prours confession and contricion and afterwarde to kepe the clene bat pou no more be fouled. And so by bat confession, contricion, and satisfaccion pou schalt gete remission of synnes (p. 73:30-33).

Although this view certainly supports the ethical aspect of the sacrament in line with the manuals-- it is rather ambiguous with regards to the actual time of absolution, since it raises the issue of whether the penitent should be given formal remission of sins simply on the basis of a stated resolve to do satisfaction, or only after they have been actually completed.<sup>36</sup>

According to the Latin manuals the penitent may be absolved after having confessed with the tears of true contrition, and having stated his full intention to perform the penances assigned to him by the confessor. It was not held by the Latin manuals that absolution was dependent upon the actual preformance of the works of satisfaction.<sup>37</sup> This sequence underlines what I believe was the essentially forensic nature of formal absolution and, indeed, the underlying tension between the forensic and remedial functions of the sacrament of penance. It may be noted that the contritionist emphasis upon satisfaction could be undermined by the fact that, having been absolved, there would be little

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<sup>36</sup> As N.J. Gray, p. 254 has observed, the formal proclamation of absolution did not, within the contritionist context, play an "overridingly important role in the remission of sin". However, as I have argued in Chapter II, the declaratory function of absolution was vital from the point of view of the penitent who-- unaware of academic contritionism-- depended upon the formula *ego absolvo te* for assurance of divine forgiveness (see above p. 19).

<sup>37</sup> See T.N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession*, pp. 86-87, 120-122.

incentive for doing penances or for moral reform, since forgiveness had already been obtained.

The *Speculum Sacerdotale* may be seen as attempting to maintain its remedial emphasis by implying that contrition and amendment (satisfaction) must *both* precede the remission of sins. A similar concern was expressed by Mannyng in his statement that to go to confession with the intention of continuing in vice would be a sin against the sacrament-- a view which raises the possibility of an invalidation of a previous absolution (see above p. 33).<sup>38</sup> These examples reflect the uneasy coupling of the forensic and ethical functions of penance within the Latin penitential manuals, a combination which apparently was viewed as even more problematic by vernacular compilers, since in order to retain the ethical/remedial function of satisfaction, they sometimes placed absolution *after* satisfaction or, as in the case of *Piers Plowman*, simply omitted it (see above pp. 18-19). It could be argued that, without the use of structuring schematic imagery (or causally integrated imagery), the compiler more easily confuses the order or time of absolution relative to works of satisfaction, since to extend absolution to the penitent before he has done his penance might well undermine the remedial function of the works of satisfaction. As we have seen thus far, however, the use of structuring schematic imagery could achieve the same remedial emphasis

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<sup>38</sup> See T.N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession*, p. 122, note 23: "[Gerson?], *Directoire*, A4b-a6b, argues that those who return after Easter to their old sins offend against the prerequisite of a "firm purpose of not relapsing or returning to their sins," and asserts they should not commune at Easter! Such an opinion, however, does not necessarily mean the confession of a relapsed penitent was necessarily invalid . . .".

without having to exclude or alter the orthodox timing of sacramental absolution.

However, in regards to both of these examples the charge of unorthodox teaching would be difficult to substantiate. The precise literary role of both writers was that of the compiler (*compiler*) who, according to medieval literary theory, could not be held responsible for the content of what he compiled, since he merely made a report (*recitatio/reportatio*) of what authors had already said or asserted.<sup>39</sup> However, there are indications that since the compiler was given credit for the organization of authorial materials, he could then be held responsible for "the manner in which he arranged the statements of other men".<sup>40</sup> Thus it would not be inconceivable that a compiler could be accused of actually distorting the content or *sentencia* of his source text or texts by the way in which he organized their various statements or doctrinal elements. That such accusations were levelled against Mannyng, Langland, or others seems unlikely, given that the changes we have thus far observed (although strictly speaking they depart from the Latin sources) have the character of promoting orthodox reform among the laity. In short, under the aegis of *compilatio*, the vernacular writer could in a sense improve upon his sources not only in terms of *utilitas* (making doctrine more accessible, memorable etc.), but also in terms of adding structural elements such as schematic images and extended metaphors which-- although ostensibly merely organizing devices-- could easily influence or perhaps even determine reader interpretation of authoritative doctrine. Thus far we have seen an example of this in the

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<sup>39</sup> A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 193.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

structural integration of the virtue of "prowesse" with the sacrament of penance via the branches/battles metaphors. A similar use of structuring extended imagery is found in the following example drawn from the *Speculum Christiani*.

The *Speculum Christiani*, a popular fourteenth-century vernacular compilation largely based upon Peckham's *Constitutiones*, skillfully manages to convey the ethical/remedial function of the entire sacrament of penance by referring to it not as penance per se, but as that "thyng" which makes a man clean, a rhetorical strategy which enables the compiler to avoid the issue concerning the time of absolution:

Foure thynges in herte bere a-way.  
 On es what thynges fileth men. A-nother es what thynges  
 make~~p~~ them clene. The therde es what thynges kepe~~p~~ hem in  
 clenness. The fourte es that ther wyl to goddes wyl thei  
 redres.<sup>41</sup>

This four-fold division-- things which be-foul a man, which make him clean, which keep him clean, and which align his will with God's-- corresponds with sin, contrition/confession/satisfaction, various practical ways to avoid sin, and finally with the examples of the saints and the mercy of God. This division also determines the order of treatment (*ordinatio*), with the sins being divided into the categories of sins of the heart, mouth, and sins of deed. Each type of sin is described through an extensive listing of its various manifestations;

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<sup>41</sup> *Speculum Christiani*, edited by Gustaf Holmstedt, OS 182, E.E.T.S. (London, 1933), p. 74.

following the comprehensive lists of sins, the writer then introduces his audience to the three "thynges" that "maken a man clene":

As to the secunde wete ȝe wele that thre thynges maken a man clene. On es sorow of herte, and hym be-houez to be in wyl to sȝnne no more. . . . Anothyr es scryfte of mouthe . . . The therde es satisfaccyon, which es fastynge, prayer, and almes-dede (p. 102,104: 2-3 and 3).

There is nothing unusual in the actual listing of the three elements of the sacrament of penance. However, it is remarkable that instead of explicitly identifying contrition, confession (shrift), and satisfaction as belonging to penance, the writer simply cites them as belonging to the second "thing"-- that is, what makes men "clene".

As an example of *compilatio* this presentation of penance as but one aspect of a series of cleansing "things" demonstrates the way in which a mere organizing device-- in this case a structuring extended metaphor-- may significantly alter the relative nature and role of the sacrament of penance. The *Speculum Christiani* stands somewhat unique in this respect compared with the other vernacular didactic texts for its use of an exclusively remedial (cleansing) nomenclature to describe penance. Yet it should be noted that this emphasis, rather than being a result of a technical deviation on the part of the writer (compiler) from orthodox doctrine (as with the *Speculum Sacerdotale's* ambivalence concerning the timing of absolution), stems entirely from the way in which he compiles or arranges the various doctrinal elements considered. It is probable that the compiler of the *Speculum Sacerdotale* had the remedial function

of penance uppermost in mind, but the compiler of the *Speculum Christiani* achieves the same emphasis using a metaphorical description of penance, a rhetorical technique which avoids raising the problematic issue concerning the timing of absolution.

The structural device of the extended metaphor or schematic image underlines the important contribution of the *compilatio* to the development of the representation, reception, and even understanding of the nature and process of penance. The *Speculum Christiani* includes the doctrinal groups pertinent to the Peckham syllabus, indeed the Peckham *Constitutiones* is cited in the work's prologue. However, the *Speculum Christiani*, like the *Vices and Virtues*, demonstrates an added dimension in its presentation of the Peckham syllabus in its attempts to transform the various and somewhat disparate doctrinal elements into structurally integrated schematic images or metaphors which, I believe, are culturally and ideologically homologous with the third type *distinctio* and the memory image or *imago rerum*. The nature of this unifying structure differs between texts, but it is possible, I think, to identify two basic features which contribute to further integrating disparate groups of doctrine and which, at the same time, may further integrate that doctrine with the life of the individual reader.

The first feature, and one which we have considered in some detail, consists of the arrangement of doctrine as part of the anatomized image or pictorial whole reminiscent of the third type *distinctio*. In configurations of this sort the primary focus is upon the spatial unity provided by the figural *res* which contains, by virtue of its constituent parts, the whole of the doctrinal aspects concerned. This feature of



the structuring schematic image corresponds to the "first-type" of "order" or *ordinatio* which Aquinas identifies in his commentary on Aristotle's *Ethica*, an arrangement of parts within a larger "containing" whole (see above p. 111, note 25). The versatility of the structuring schematic image has been described in terms of its potential mnemonic role as a "compositional site" or central image which, although it may not depict the entire main text, does structurally unify extensive didactic prose (see above pp. 101-102).

The second feature may be described in terms of the causal progression of the soul from sin to salvation. This cause-and-effect feature of the structuring schematic image corresponds with the second sort of "order" described by Aquinas in his commentary on the *Ethica*--that is, the arrangement of "things" with reference to an "end" (*finis*). Indeed, the presence of causality within a didactic text does not necessarily involve the presence or use of narrative. We have seen that within the static tree image the relationships between trunk, branches and leaves have a strong causal basis. Likewise, any didactic presentation of the elements of penances carries with it the supposition that the standard *ordinatio* or "order of treatment" (contrition, confession, satisfaction) shows a causal correspondence with the actual experience of the penitent within the confessional.

However, apart from these intrinsic causal aspects there are others which suggest a more explicit regard on the part of the compiler for the human context of doctrine. In the *Vices and Virtues* this awareness takes the form, I believe, of trying to closely integrate the sacrament of penance with the remedial virtues by the use of causally linked

images such as the branches and the battles, an attempt which clearly presupposes the audience's need for explicit causal links between doctrinal groups.

In the *Speculum Christiani* the causal linkage between penance and the moral reform of the individual is effected with the use of the extended metaphor of cleansing. We have seen a similar equation between penance and cleansing made in *Piers* B-text in Conscience's explanation of penance to Haukyn (see above p. 30). However, in the *Speculum Christiani* the cleansing metaphor stands alone without the larger narrative context of Langland's allegory, a difference which-- while not denying a possible narrative frame-work for the extended metaphor-- stops short of recasting its causal links between different "things" which cleanse the soul into specific allegorical or narrative events. From a pedagogical viewpoint this difference means that the extended metaphor obtains a more universal application than the narrative or perhaps even the allegory, since rather than representing a fixed, past series of events specific to a protagonist, it suggests a general paradigm for all future human actions. This difference between narrative and metaphorical modes will be discussed more fully with reference to the penitential *exempla* of Chapter V. For the present, it will suffice to note that the practical, organizing role of the compiler must be seen a potent factor in the development of penance in relation to other doctrinal groups, a synthesis which in itself further defines penance in terms of how it is to be conducted in the actual life.

### Piers Plowman and the Castle Image

As a further demonstration of the possibilities available to the compiler, Langland's structuring schematic image of the castle-- as the primary feature in the map of the "way to Truth" in Passus V-- offers both an alternative strategy for the configuration of doctrine (including penance) and a sophisticated example of the integration of penance and the remedial virtues. Unfortunately, critics have tended to move quickly and superficially over the map of the "way to Truth" and the castle image in order to discuss the events within Piers' half-acre which in turn lead to the enigmatic tearing of the pardon.

M.J. Carruthers has described the castle image as a "misrepresentation" of Truth, since it is, in her opinion, a flawed type of signifying image.<sup>42</sup> "Flawed" in this case refers to the schematic image and its supposed inability to signify cause and effect relations, actions, or processes. Therefore, in Carruthers' opinion, Langland sets up the structuring schematic image of the castle in order to "emphasize the inadequacy of those structures [schematic images] as truthful epistemological signs".<sup>43</sup> The view that the castle image is inadequate stems from the assumption that only narrative is capable of revealing the dynamic, causal aspects of doctrine. Not surprisingly,

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<sup>42</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Search for St. Truth* (Evanston, Illinois, 1973), p. 64.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Carruthers discounts the importance of the route-map metaphor (including the castle image) outright as an example of bad technique and replaces it with the events of the half-acre:

When the folk of the field cannot understand the allegory of the map to Truth, Piers provides them with an alternative route, a different structure for their pilgrimage: they can help him plow his half-acre . . . The narrative, in this allegory [the half-acre] derives its meaning not from personified language but from figural action. Figural allegory is designed to perceive actions and things, events and persons as aspects of a spiritual pattern revealed in time and in particular occasions.<sup>44</sup>

However, while I would agree that the so-called "figural allegory" of the half-acre is more specific to time and place, it does not then follow that the route-map metaphor and the schematic castle image are incapable of signifying actions, processes or relations between doctrinal elements-- features which both David Aers and M.J. Carruthers tend to associate exclusively with narrative and narrative allegory.<sup>45</sup> As we shall see, the structuring schematic imagery of the castle

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>45</sup> David Aers, *Piers Plowman and Christian Allegory* (London, 1975), pp. 46-47 dismisses Deguileville's figural representation of "Dame penance" in *Pelerinage de l'Ame* as a "naive picture model, as inadequate for developing a constructive critique of orthodox theology and ethics as for defending and developing orthodox religious thought and language". As we have seen in the case of the *Vices and Virtues*, the so-called "picture model" as a structuring schematic image was, indeed, capable of "developing" further the representation, reception, and understanding of the nature and the process of penitential doctrine (see above pp. 86-119).

performs a vital function within *Piers Plowman* as a unifying *imago rerum* or paradigmatic image which, because of its schematic causality, also shows the dynamic causal relations between doctrinal groups. While the "field of folk" do not actually embark upon the pilgrimage which Piers' metaphorical route-map describes, the map's description of the role of penance, the seven remedial virtues, grace and mercy, and finally the integration of Truth within the heart mark important events which the dreamer will encounter within the larger poem as a whole.

In the figural description of the "way to Truth" in Passus V, a total of four different, but related, "stages" in the journey are employed: the first is the actual approach to the "court" (V: 560-584), the second is the "court" itself (V: 585-600), the third is the entrance to the "court" (V: 601-608) and the fourth consists of the seven "posternes" or side doors to the "court" (V: 618-624).

However, these causal "stages" also "contain" limited images or sub-images, each of which has a small amount of commentary, and with the castle image we find an example of what could easily be defined as a structuring schematic image which, although ostensibly a part of the causal ordering of the figural journey, stands in its own right as a paradigmatic *imago rerum*. As we have seen earlier, this combination displays a bringing together of the "two types" of order, or in literary terms the *ordinatio*, described by Aquinas-- first, the "the kind of order which the parts of a whole have among themselves" and secondly, the order of things to an "end" (see above p. 112, note 26 and p. 133). The "stages" in the figural journey, of course, represent the "causal" *ordinatio* of "things to an end", but in their dual role as "limited

images" or, as in the case of the castle, as structuring schematic images, they also display the "pictorial" *ordinatio* of "parts of a whole" or what has been referred to as the "anatomization of constituent parts" as, for instance, in the third type of *distinctio* (see above pp. 67-69).

We may note a number of ways in which Langland helps or makes possible this combination of the "pictorial" and "causal" types of *ordinatio*. Firstly the "stages" of the figural journey depict doctrine *breviter et summatim* using topographical features as "limited images". This technique is especially evident in the ten commandments where the various features to be encountered are tagged with key-words that are self-explanatory and which also indicate, mnemonically, their more extended forms:

And so boweth forth by a brook, "Beth-buxom-of-speche",

Forto ye fynden a ford, "Youre-fadres-honoureth":

*Honora patrem et matrem etc. . . .*

Thanne shaltow come by a croft, but come thow noght  
therinne:

The croft hatte "Coveite-noght-mennes-catel-ne-hire-wyves-  
Ne-noon-of-hire-servaunts-that-noyen-hem-myghte" (V: 566-  
574).

The "limited images" such as the "ford" and the "croft", although essentially images rather than just causal "events", ~~the~~<sup>25</sup> "parts" of the figural journey are also constituent members of a "pictorial" whole. This combination of the causal and pictorial is also evident at the



second "stage" of the figural journey where the castle is encountered. The merging of the "causal" and "pictorial" *ordinationes* also makes it possible for Langland to convey a large body of doctrine, in causal terms, without ever losing the continuity and mnemonic value afforded by the spatial effect of the images. This technique constantly keeps the figural journey and commentary tied to supporting imagery and there is a sense in which the causal progression itself stems, in the main, from the "fixed point" of the schematic castle image (see above pp. 104-105).

This technique pays heed to the warning Albert the Great noted in his commentary on the *Ad Herennium* that memory devices should not "distend the soul"—that is, they should not be used to convey so much commentary that they expand beyond the ability of the memory to picture them (see above p. 104). Albert warned against the use of "imaginary spaces such as a camp or a city" which, in their often considerable size and uniformity, would make recall more difficult. Consequently he seems to have preferred real "memory places" such as buildings.<sup>46</sup> Langland, although he invents imaginary "memory places", carefully avoids the over-extension of the memory by utilizing a number of relatively small images such as the "ford", "hill", and "croft" and the constituent parts of the castle image, all of which, *breviter et summatim*, refer to an extended amount of commentary.

Beyond the mnemonic advantages of Langland's images, their combination with the figural journey (the over-arching structure) also makes possible the causal integration of what otherwise would be only

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<sup>46</sup> Francis Yates, *The Art of Memory*, p. 63.

proximate doctrinal concepts. The effect of this technique is not only one of synthesizing somewhat disparate doctrinal groups, but one which also-- in a fashion more explicit than that found in the images of the *Vices and Virtues* or the extended metaphor of the *Speculum Christiani*--utilizes the spiritual journey or experience of the reader as its defining structure.

Take for example the first "stage", the approach, which signifies the ten commandments. Generally the Middle English works of religious instruction, compiled on the basis of the Peckham syllabus, included a section on the ten commandments in addition to the articles of the faith, and the seven sacraments.<sup>47</sup> These points of doctrine were initially set out in tract form and were included with the "Lambeth constitutions" (1281) which ruled that they were to be taught to the people at least once per quarter or more. However, the tract form did not, alone, ensure that listeners or readers would understand how these various precepts were related within actual experience. Langland, by placing his ten commandments "stage" (the approach to the castle) within the causal *ordinatio* of the figural journey, suggests (by virtue of the causal progression which "enters" into the interior of the "pictorial" *ordinatio* of the castle image) how the actual ten commandments function relative to the other doctrinal points, such as penance, and thus how they should be implemented within real experience:

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<sup>47</sup> *Speculum Christiani*, edited by Gustaf Holmstedt, p. 6: 3-9. This *Speculum* includes the Peckham syllabus in its preface: "In constitucione Lambeth dicitur: We bydde and commanunde that euery curat expowne and declare openly to the pepil by hym-selfe or be a-nothyr on a solempne day or mo eche quarter ones: The articles of the fayth The ten commaundmentes . . . and The seuen sacraments of grace."

Thanne shaltow come to a court as cler as the sonne.  
 The moot is of Mercy the manoir aboute,  
 And alle the walles ben of Wit to holden Wil oute,  
 And kerneled with Cristendom that kynde to save,  
 Botrased with "Bileef-so-or-thow-beest-noght-saved."  
 And alle the houses ben hiled, halles and chambres,  
 With no leed but with love and lowe speche, . . .  
 The brugge is of "Bidde-wel-the-bet-may-thow-spede;"  
 Ech piler is of penaunce, of preieres to seyntes;  
 Of Almesdedes are the hokes that the gates hangen on (V:  
 585-594).

In comparing this passage to the first "stage" of the figural journey we can see a temporary interruption of the "causal" *ordinatio* with the shift to a "pictorial" *ordinatio* in which the constituent parts of the "whole" of the schematic castle image are described (see above pp. 136-137). The value of the schematic castle image as part of the "causal" *ordinatio* may, I believe, have to do primarily with its mnemonic value as a paradigmatic *imago rerum* which acts as a "compositional site" or "meditational artifact".

However, at the same time as the paradigmatic castle image is being fixed in the memory, its constituent parts are also perceived as experiential landmarks, points of reference *within* the over-arching "causal" *ordinatio* of the figural journey. The presence of the schematic castle image within the causal structure of the figural journey also ensures that essential points of doctrine retain their objective status even within the experiential dimension of the

subjective journey to Truth. The importance of this aspect of the figural journey will become more evident in Chapter V where it is compared with the untrustworthy reader responses-- or likely responses-- generated by the penitential *exempla*.

Langland's figural "way to Truth" also contributes to the issue concerning the forensic and remedial/ethical functions of the sacrament of penance. When Piers, in his description, arrives at the "court as cler as the sonne" (V: 585), we are given first an over-all account of the various external features of the castle ("pictorial" *ordinatio*) with their accompanying elements of doctrine or Christian belief. This initial and "external" view of the castle swiftly gives way to a description of the sacrament of penance as the step necessary to gaining an entrance to the interior of the castle:

Grace hatte the gateward, a good man for sothe;  
 His man hatte "Amende-yow" -- many man hym knoweth.  
 Telleth hym this tokene: "Truthe woot the sothe--  
 I parfourned the penaunce that the preest me enjoyned  
 And am sory for my synnes and so I shal evere  
 Whan I thynke thereon, theigh I were a Pope".  
 Biddeth Amende-yow meke hym til his maister ones  
 To wayven up the wicket that the womman shette  
 Thro Adam and Eve eten apples unrosted. (V: 595-603).

It is important to notice that it is "Amende-yow" who, as Grace's "man", serves as an intermediary between the penitent (or pilgrim) and the porter, Grace. The formula, "Truthe woot the sothe" precedes the

penitent's claim that he has already done the penances assigned to him, and secondly that he is still contrite. The close association made between contrition and moral reform reveals a contritionist emphasis in line with the Latin penitential manuals (see above pp. 28-29). Moreover, the contritionist stance (and the semi-Pelagian theology which it complemented) are both evident in the vital role of "Amende-yow" as the "man" who appeals to Grace and who effects-- via Grace-- the entrance of the penitent to the "court".<sup>48</sup>

"Amende-yow" itself has the didactic force of making moral reformation an integral-- and continuous-- part of the sacrament of penance. The reader (or would-be penitent) encounters Grace's man not as a figure representing moral changes already made, but as a call to on-going moral efforts. Grace actually opens the "wicket that the womman shette", but this grace is not efficacious until the penitent amends his life. Amendment, in turn, may only take place *after* the penances assigned by the priest have been performed and in tandem with a continual sorrow for sin.

The change of tenses within the penitent's statement ("I parfourned the penaunce" and "am sory for my synnes and so I shal evere") suggests

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<sup>48</sup> I have introduced the term "Semi-Pelagian" with some hesitation, since although it may-- as Robert Adams has shown-- describe the academic theological position to which Langland's statements on salvation and its requirements most closely correspond, it is not, I believe, necessary to assume that Langland would have considered his work expressive of any theological academic position, including "Semi-Pelagianism". Adams' view that Langland had the issue of Grace and Works uppermost in his mind, fails to take into account that in its more practical and accessible form this issue made itself felt in the tension between the forensic and remedial functions of the sacrament of penance. See Robert Adams, "Piers's Pardon and Langland's Semi-Pelagianism", *Traditio*, 39 (1983), pp. 367-418.

Langland's acute sensitivity to causal relations between the various elements of the sacrament of penance. The works of satisfaction, as the Latin manuals made clear, were to be performed for only a limited period of time. Their remedial function, as we have seen, was to remove the occasions for sin-- that is, the circumstances which would make a fall to temptation more likely (see above p. 27). In Passus V the would-be penitent, having done works of satisfaction as *remedium* for sin (past tense), is then considered to be in a position to begin the process of moral reform. However, this process assumes the back-drop of contrition, as both the *present* and *future* state necessary for works of satisfaction and true amendment.

This representation of the sacrament of penance, as well as reinforcing its ethical function, upsets the standard "causal" *ordinatio* of the sacrament's elements: contrition, confession and satisfaction. Contrition, rather than being merely the first step towards absolution, is presented as both preceeding and following the works of satisfaction. Furthermore, the stress upon the vital function of "Amende-yow" prioritizes the remedial/ethical function of the sacrament. This suggests that Langland viewed penance as a necessary condition for the moral reform of the life, but not-- without moral reform-- sufficient to the task of finding Truth within the self. The scene of Truth within the heart underscores Langland's preoccupation with moral reform as opposed to the more popular view of the sacrament of penance as an entirely forensic process which, in view of the availability of



indulgences, could be used to gain heaven regardless of one's actual moral status.<sup>49</sup>

And if Grace graunte thee to go in in this wise  
 Thow shalt see in thiselwe Truthe sitte in thyn herte  
 In a cheyne of charite, as thow a child were,  
 To suffren hym and segge noght ayein thi sires wille (V:  
 605-608).

By situating the goal of the pilgrimage within the heart-- as opposed to either a shrine or heaven-- Langland questions the exclusively forensic view of penance, and indeed salvation, which potentially reduced the sacrament to formal absolution and the remission of the legal debt of sin; terms which tended to conceive of the Christian life solely in the external sense of gaining heaven.

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<sup>49</sup> There seems to have been considerable confusion as to the precise role of the indulgence relative to the sacrament of penance, since many penitents believed that an indulgence could substitute for both contrition and works of satisfaction, a problem attested to by Master Robert Rypon, sub-prior of Durham (1401) in MS. Harl. 4894, fol. 102 b et seq. (cited by G.R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England*, (Cambridge, 1926), appendix III, p. 358). "Ideo illi qui in indulgenciis spem venie reponunt quandoque multipliciter sunt decepti. Praesertim illi qui optenta Domini pape indulgentia a poena, ut vulgariter dicitur, et a culpa, credentes quod virtute bullarum indulgentie una cum verbali confessione facta electo sacerdoti, omnis tam poena quam culpa eis totaliter remittetur. O spes frivola atque vana . . ."

"Therefore they who place their hope of pardon in indulgences have been deceived many different times and in many ways. Especially they who wish to obtain an indulgence of the Pope from punishment, as it is commonly said, and from guilt, believing that by virtue of a bull of indulgence together with the act of oral confession anything due to them is completely remitted, all the guilt as well as the punishment. O hope worthless and vain . . ."

It is difficult when reading Langland's figural journey to Truth to retain the "internal" sense of the pilgrimage's goal-- that is, "Truth within the heart". Indeed, there is both a tendency and a probable case for reading the arrival of the would-be pilgrim at Truth as synonymous with the gaining of heaven. However, throughout his poem Langland consistently maintains the uncertainty of the outcome of the on-going spiritual experience and we are not provided with many conclusive examples of penitents having arrived once-for-all within the inviolate borders of heaven.

The same contingency applied, of course, to the internal vision of Truth resident within the heart. Piers warns his listeners that, having arrived at Truth, they could easily fall to the sin of Wrath, a condition which could lead ultimately to the sin of pride:

Ac be war thanne of Wrathe, that wikked sherewe:  
 He hath envye to hym that in thyn herte sitteth,  
 And poketh forth pride to preise thiselven (V: 609-611).

Once pride, the root of all the deadly sins, has infected the Christian's heart he finds himself "dryven out as dew" from the place of Truth, and "the dore closed":

And so worstow dryven out as dew, and the dore closed,  
 Keyed and cliketted to kepe thee withouten  
 Happily an hundred wynter er thow eft entre! (V: 613-615).

In the *Vices and Virtues* the danger of succumbing to pride is presented as the last of the seven battles which the penitent must fight before gaining admittance to paradise and the Tree of life. It should be noted how similar the description of this battle is with the description of pride in *Piers*:

After alle þes batailes comeþ þe laste, þat is þe  
strengeste. For þe deuel, þat is wel malicious and slize,  
whan he seep þat þe man or womman is gon vp to þe holy lif  
of parfistnesse and þat þei haue alle þes forseid batailes  
ouercome & venquised, þan assailleþ he hym bi veyn glorie,  
þat is, he wenep hymself he be so good þat non may be bettre  
and þat he is wel wip God, for he hap so moche do and  
suffred for hym, wher-for þei fallen ofte from so hize in-to  
þe lowest pitt . . . (pp. 186-187: 31-33 and 1-7).

As with Langland's figural journey in Passus V, the battle against pride in the *Vices and Virtues* assumes that the penitent has already confessed and has performed the penances assigned to him. But it is here that the similarity ends, for while in the *Vices and Virtues*, the completion of the last battle warrants entrance into heaven, in *Piers* the discussion of pride is not immediately followed with the prospect of eternal life. Instead, in a remarkable deviation from the order of treatment found in the *Vices and Virtues*, Langland introduces the seven remedial virtues as alternative entrances (posternes) to the castle of Truth:

Ac ther are seven sustren that serven Truthe evere  
And arn porters of the posternes that to the place longeth

That oon hatte Abstinence, and Humilite another;  
 Charite and Chastite ben hise chief maydenes;  
 Pacience and Pees, mucche peple thei helpeth;  
 Largenesse the lady, she let in ful manye--  
 Heo hath holpe a thousand out of the develes punfolde.  
 And who is sib to thise sevene, so me God helpe,  
 He is wonderly welcome and faire underfongen.  
 And but if ye be sibbe to some of thise sevene--  
 It is ful hard, by myn heed, quod Piers, for any of yow  
 alle. To geten ingong at any gate, but grace be the moore!  
 (V: 618-629).

This introduction to the remedial virtues as seven porters of seven posternes (according to the O.E.D. the "posterne" was a small, often private secondary entrance to a castle) returns the listening/reading audience to the "external" view of the castle image. This return in the figural journey to the "outside" of the castle, in addition to depicting the perspective of those who were or would be thrust out because of pride, also gives Langland an opportunity to include the seven remedial virtues as part of his schematic castle image. However, as part of the figural journey, this sudden appearance of alternative entrances to the castle immediately raises questions as to the relationship between the main gate (opened by profession of continual contrition, already performed penances, on-going efforts to amend the life, and grace) and the smaller side-doors which also provide entrance to the castle. Do the side-doors open to those who have not done penance? May one enter through the main gate without being "sib" to any of the seven remedial virtues?

The first question finds its answer in the fact that in order to possess the seven remedial virtues one would, by definition, had to have done penance. The second question, however, proves more intractable, since Langland implies that while the seven remedial virtues certainly make entrance into any of the castle gates easier, they are not absolutely required:

And who is sib to thise sevene, so me God helpe,  
 He is wonderly welcome and faire underfongen.  
 And but if ye be sibbe to some of thise sevene--  
 It is ful hard, by myn heed, quod Piers, for any of yow  
 alle  
 To geten ingong at any gate but grace by the moore (V: 625-  
 629).

In effect, by returning to an "outside" view of the castle and identifying the seven posternes as seemingly "alternative" entrances, Langland hints at the problematic lack of integration-- inherent to the Latin penitential manuals and their sources-- between the forensic and remedial functions of penance (see above p. 29). Moreover, rather than attempting to closely integrate these two roles, he allows for a degree of divergence between them in his statement that although the remedial virtues influence and make easier the entrance to "any gate" they are not an absolute requirement. With a good measure of grace it is possible, according to Piers, to find entrance to the castle without the remedial virtues.

It is useful to remind ourselves that at least one point in the allegory (the view of Truth sitting in the heart) the castle image is explicitly shown to signify the soul of the individual Christian. However, at the conclusion of the allegory the castle's meaning shifts-- at least from the point of view of the reader-- from the identification of the castle as the human soul to the castle as heaven. This effect, rather than being the result of any explicit shift in the allegory itself, stems from the responses which a number of Piers' audience make to the stipulation that one must be "sibbe" (related) to the seven remedial virtues or it will be "ful hard . . . to geten ingong at any gate":

"Now by Crist!" quod a kuttepur, "I have no kyn there."

"Ne I", quod an apeward, "by aught that I knowe."

"Wite God," quod a wafrestere, "wiste I this for sothe,

Sholde I never ferther a foot for no freres prechyng" (V: 630-33).

These hopelessly literal responses-- they cannot think of any "kyn" of theirs which live in the castle-- isolate but one of two potential meanings which may be drawn from the figural journey. The other-- the subjective meaning of the castle as the human soul-- is not necessarily displaced by the kuttepur's, apeward's, and wafrestere's interpretation of the castle as heaven, but we are, I think, made aware of the vulnerability or weakness of the meaning of the castle as the human soul. The understanding (or "misunderstanding") displayed by the kuttepur and his fellows entirely misses the explicit meaning of the "arrival" of the would-be penitent at the inner sanctum of the castle



where, instead of finding himself in heaven, he experiences a vision of Truth sitting within his own heart. That this explicit indicator of the allegory's meaning should go unheeded in the minds of his audience, suggests, I believe, an awareness on Langland's part of the difficulties inherent to the representation of penitential doctrine to the morally degenerate members of the fictional audience.

There are two likely reasons for the kuttepur's, apeward's and wafrestere's apparent misreading of the allegory: the first has to do, I think, with the natural tendency for penitents to focus upon the forensic aspect of the salvation process which, in turn, conceives of the spiritual journey in terms of gaining the "end" or *finis* of heaven rather than in terms of the "end" of Truth within the heart. The second reason bears upon the use of the word "sibbe" to describe the key which opens the posternes. The introduction of the notion of familial relations-- with associations of immediate, informal entry through the private doors of the castle--- contrasts powerfully with the earlier formal statement or "tokene" used by the stranger to gain entry to the main gate. The approach to the main gate exemplifies the minimum penitential exercise required for salvation. The entrance to the seven posternes-- while not negating the vital function of the sacrament of penance-- assumes, I think, an approach to the castle by a penitent who has aimed for and perhaps achieved the fullest or maximum standard of ethical reform. This ethically ambitious individual gains immediate entry to the castle without having to plead his case at the legal or forensic level associated with the main gate. No formal or legal token is required because the penitent, by virtue of his familial relations with the "seven sustren", already belongs within the castle.

For the kuttepure and his fellows, aliens to the seven virtues, the use of the term "sibbe" in connection with salvation raises serious problems, but their difficult position also raises rhetorical challenges for Langland. Having defined the role of the seven virtues both as alternative doors to the castle and as important influencing factors in the entrance to the other, main gate, he is then confronted with individuals whose inferior moral status, combined with their morally compromising trades, makes it unlikely that they will ever find themselves "sibbe" to the seven virtues. From their point of view, Piers' emphasis upon the remedial virtues gives them little hope of salvation, because although they might have gone to confession and received absolution, there is no evidence of them having performed works of satisfaction, an omission which ensures that they will continue sinning.

However, the existence of this particular group within the larger audience (the field of folk)-- and their likely response to this allegory-- has been anticipated by Langland in the depiction of two different types of "entrances" to the castle. The main gate and the posternes are spatially distinct parts of the castle image, but within Piers' commentary on the seven remedial virtues we are made to understand that in terms of their functions, they overlap considerably (see V: 627-629 quoted above).

The precise nature of this functional overlap deserves some careful attention. We should be suspicious, initially, of the wisdom of presenting alternative entrances to the castle image, since they increase the risk that the reader will extract the meaning that gaining

entrance to the main gate does not require an acquaintance with the remedial virtues. Langland preempts this wrong interpretation of the castle image through his emphasis upon Amend-yow as the functional element in gaining entrance to the main gate, and in the statement that it is difficult to enter "any gate" without the seven virtues.

Yet this functional overlap between penance and the remedial virtues should not detract from the fact that there are two types of gates to the castle. The overlap integrates the forensic and remedial functions of penance in the figural journey to Truth, but the two quite separate types of entrances-- without detracting from the imperative that Christian men and women become "good"-- also acknowledge that there is no single standard of goodness required for entrance into the castle. As noted above, this sort of proposition carries with it a serious risk of misinterpretation; however, in addition to Langland's integration of the forensic and remedial, he also makes clear-- via Piers' commentary-- that for those who achieve only the minimum standard required for salvation an extra measure of grace is needed which, presumably, would compensate for their moral short-comings.

The role of grace throughout the figural journey is closely tied to those situations where the penitent lacks the seven remedial virtues. For example, in the description to the main gate the token, although it is carried by Amend-yow, essentially functions as a plea to Grace that admittance be allowed, an outcome which, according to Piers, is by no means certain:

Biddeth Amende-yow meke hym til his maister ones

To wayven up the wicket that the womman shette...  
 And if Grace graunte thee to go in in this wise  
 Thow shalt see in thiselve Truthe . . . (V: 601-6).

This sense of an uncertain outcome-- along with the compensating function of grace for those who lack virtue-- appears as well in Piers' statement that it is "ful hard" to find entrance into any gate without being "sibbe" to the virtues, "but *grace* be the moore!" (V :627-9) And finally, in his response to the kuttepus', apeward's, and wafrestere's despair of finding entrance to the castle, Piers stresses the possibility (not certainty) that mercy may be available to those who lack virtues:

Yis! quod Piers the Plowman, and poked hem all to goode,  
 Mercy is a maiden there, hath myght over hem alle;  
 And she is sib to alle synfulle, and hire sone also,  
 And thorough the help of hem two-- hope thow noon oother--  
 Thow myght gete grace there-- so thow go bityme (V: 634-8).

With this statement, Piers acknowledges the need for the preacher, teacher or vernacular compiler to show how those who lack virtue may be saved. The penitent who is not "sibbe" to the remedial virtues is, however, "sib" to Mercy (the Virgin Mary) and her "sone" (Christ) who together may extend grace to the sinner. However, Piers continues to exhort "hem alle to goode": there is no sense of merely aiming for the minimum required for salvation. Because the kuttepus and the others of his class stand close to spiritual despair, Piers-- as a good confessor-- emphasizes the availability of Mercy as a source of hope. But this

salvific strategy-- of itself-- is consistently presented as uncertain as compared with the immediate and assured entrance granted to those who are "sibbe" to the remedial virtues.

Langland's recognition of these two classes through the two types of entrances to the schematic castle image allows him to extend mercy to the penitent who, lacking virtue, stands in danger of despair, while simultaneously stressing the imperative of continued striving after virtue. This simultaneous targeting of two distinct groups within his audience provides, I think, a sophisticated demonstration of Alexander of Hales' rhetorical principle regarding the matching of the "mode to the objective" or rhetorical *decorum* (see above pp. 55-56). Furthermore, by incorporating the responses of the kuttepus and his companions to Piers' exhortation to virtue, Langland is able to speak accurately to their condition (*status*) without undermining the necessity for moral reform.

A similar dual emphasis is found in the *Vices and Virtues* where the compiler draws a contrast between the "burgies", who does no more than is necessary to enter heaven, and the "knyt" who aims for "hi3e hil of parfyttesse":

Now haue we spoken of 3iftes and of vertues pat gouernen hem  
pat lyuen in þe world at þe lowest of þre staates pat we  
haue spoken of herto-fore. Now schulle we wiþ þe help of þe  
Holy Gost speke of 3iftes and of vertues pat most  
propreliche longen to hem pat despisen þe world and drawen

to þe hiȝe hil of parfistnesse. Of hem seiþ Iop propreliche  
 þat þe lif of a man or a womman in erþe fareþ as knyȝthod.  
 For þe lif of men in erþe fareþ as burgeiserie. Now biholde  
 on a day a burgeis and a newe knyȝt, and þou schalt see  
 grete dyuersite of hope and prowes. Prowesse in knyȝthode  
 is cleped douȝtynesse. Þe burgeis hopeþ to wyne and to  
 gadre and chaffaren, and þe ende of his entencion is al to  
 be riche and noble in his lif holden and moche honoured (p.  
 161: 10-24).

The burgess corresponds to that class of men whose spiritual lives are characterized by the performance of the basic standards required for salvation. The compiler clearly defines this basic or safe minimum standard in terms strikingly similar to those found in the "tokene" which Piers instructs the penitents to deliver at the main-gate to the castle. The burgess' spirituality in the *Vices and Virtues* essentially consists of avoiding "grete" sins and doing penance rather than making concerted efforts to embrace the seven remedial virtues:

Þes tweie staates we seen apertliche in tweie manere of men,  
 wher-of some ben þat wolen wel kepe hem from grete synnes,  
 do penaunce, ȝeue almesse, holde þe comaundementes of God  
 and holy chirche, and wel it likeþ hem ȝif þei mowe at þe  
 laste be saued (pp. 161-162: 28-9 and 1-4).

This description is somewhat at odds, however, with the compiler's statement that the virtue of prowesse-- and by implication its seven



branches/battles-- belong to the second class of individuals proper-- that is, the spiritual knights:

Now haue we spoken of ȝiftes and of vertues þat gouernen hem  
þat lyuen in þe world at þe lowest of þre staates . . . Now  
schulle we wip þe help of þe Holy Gost speke of ȝiftes and  
of vertues þat most propreliche longen to hem þat despisen  
þe world and drawen to þe hiȝe hil of parfȝtnesse (p. 161:  
10-16).

We should expect, given the division the compiler makes between those virtues appropriate to the two classes of penitents, that "prowesse" and its branches/battles would apply only to the spiritual knight whose goal is moral perfection. However, much as with Langland's castle image, the acknowledgement of the two classes of penitents does not result in an equally clear distinction being made between their respective spiritual obligations. It might be said that the burgess' spirituality is characterized by the more passive virtues, while the knight's spirituality falls more under the heading of the active virtue of "prowesse" which strives for moral perfection.

However, useful as this generalization may appear, there can be little doubt that if the burgess-type penitent were to lose-- or refuse to fight-- any or all of the seven battles listed as belonging to the virtue of "prowesse", he would also fail to achieve even the presumably minimum safe standard which the compiler prescribes for him (doing penances and avoiding great sins). This fact is especially evident in the case of the first battle-- the battle against the deadly sins,

fought with the armor of penance-- and the last battle against pride. However, it also applies to the other four battles: the battle of penance, the battles with the flesh, the battle with fortune and the battle against wicked men (*Vices and Virtues*, pp. 184-87), since to fail in any of these combats would lead to deadly sin.

It would appear that having identified the two classes of penitents, the compiler-- albeit with a rather different technique-- insists, along with Langland, upon an ambiguous overlap between the spiritual duties required of the two groups. Indeed, it is difficult to see how the mere burgess could avoid the seven "battles" of the spiritual knight without seriously endangering his soul. A similar difficulty attends the two types of entrances which Langland provides to his schematic castle image: how, it may be asked, could a penitent confidently enter the main-gate without also being able to confidently approach one or all of the seven posterns?

In both these texts a distinction is made between the spiritual athlete and the penitent whose primary aim is simply to avoid Hell. However, while allowances are made for the spiritually weak penitent-- not all those who enter Heaven will be perfect, hence the availability of Grace and Mercy-- Langland and the compiler of *Vices and Virtues* both attempt to steer the spiritually weak away from misappropriating grace and mercy as the basis for salvific strategies which ensure salvation while allowing for moral laxity. In both *Piers* and the *Vices and Virtues*, the notion of a minimum standard required for salvation is consistently down-played. There might well be two entrances to the

Heavenly Jerusalem, but to enter either of them requires adherence-- in practice or intention-- to a single moral standard.

Thus far we have paid special attention to the tension, or perhaps inconsistency, between the forensic and remedial functions of the sacrament of penance. The main gate of the castle image admits sinners according to the more forensic formula of grace and mercy; while the "posternes" open to those who have demonstrated kinship with the remedial virtues. However, as both Langland's castle allegory and the *Vices and Virtues* show, this tension translates easily into two different groups of persons: the morally weak and the morally strong. With reference to these two groups Langland is conspicuous for his resistance to the notion of simply providing the morally weak with an alternative way to salvation suited to their particular needs. We find evidence of this in the castle image where, as we have seen, he points to the considerable risk involved for those who rely upon grace and mercy (the forensic, debt erasing elements in the salvation process) and the relative security extended to those who strive to become virtuous.

In summary, the utility of the schematic image has been shown to consist in its integration of penance with other parts of Christian doctrine, in its function as a "compositional site" for the recollection of the main text, in its causal ordering of the parts of the sacrament of penance, and finally in its spatial character which, as Langland demonstrates, may be used to differentiate between types of persons within the audience.

## CHAPTER V

## Teaching Penance with Exemplary Narrative

This Chapter examines the use of the short narrative or *exemplum* for teaching the sacrament of penance. Not suprisingly, the role of the *exemplum* in religious instruction is most frequently described in terms of its usefulness for enlivening the sermon in order to catch the interest of an audience who otherwise would not be able to understand, or perhaps endure, the purely didactic sermon.<sup>1</sup> John Myrc, in his *Festial* (a sermon collection), explains in sermon forty that for certain persons a belief in the Trinity could come only through the hearing of "ensampulls" which, although in many ways imperfect as representations of the Holy Trinity, nevertheless did "lyghten" the "wit":

For that many wyttys ben lat and heuy forto leue that thay  
may not here ny se, but thay be broght yn by ensampull. For  
thogh the ensampull be not most commendabull, yet for the  
more parte hit may soo lyghten his wit, that he may the  
sondyr come to beleue.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to *exemplum* tradition see *The Dialogues of Creatures Moralyse*, edited by Gregory Kratzmann and Elizabeth Gee (Leiden, 1988), pp. 1-25. See also T.F. Crane, "Mediaeval Sermon-Books and Stories and their Study since 1883", *Proceedings of the American Philological Society*, 56 (1917), 369-402 and J.A. Mosher, *The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England* (New York, 1911).

<sup>2</sup> Mirk's *Festial*, edited by T. Erbe, EETS ES 96 (London, 1905), p. 166.

This rationale for the use of *exempla* in sermons finds further support in an actual *exemplum*, found in the Middle English *Alphabet of Tales*, where the story cites an historical instance where the use of stories or "tales" within sermons proved necessary to the conversion of England:

Saynt Bede tellis in "Gestis Anglorum" how, when Englonde was oute of þe belefe, þe pope sente in-to it to preche a bisshop þat was a passyng sutell clerk, & a well-letterd; and he vsid so mekull soteltie & strange saying in his sermons, þat his prechyng owder litle proffettid or noght. And þan þer was sent a noder þat was les of connyng of literatur þan he was, & he vsid talis & gude exsample in his sermon; and he with-in a while conuertyd nere-hand all Englonde.<sup>3</sup>

The reference in this *exemplum* to the two types of sermons, clearly points to the late-medieval recognition of the need to appeal to the dispositions (*affectus*) of the members of an audience, and of the need to cater to different levels of understanding (*intellectus*) (see above p. 57). In the *exemplum*, the first preacher-- the "bisshop"-- fails to win converts because he fails to preach in a way which would "move" the *affectus* and, just as importantly, he fails properly to estimate the *intellectus* of his hearers. Thomas Waleys, in *De modo componendi sermones*, refers to the narrative-- and potentially other rhetorical devices such as images, pictures etc.-- as modes which reach the

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<sup>3</sup> *Alphabetum Narrationum: An Alphabet of Tales, An English Translation of the Alphabetum Narrationum of Etienne de Besancon*, edited by Mary Macleod Banks, 2 volumes, OS 126, 127, E.E.T.S. (London, 1904-5), vol. 1, p. 217.

*affectus* of the less learned members of society and thus "move" the hearers to doing good:

The preacher's task is not only to stir the intelligence (*intellectus*) towards what is true by means of the inevitable conclusions of arguments, but also, by means of narrative and likely persuasion, to stir the emotions to piety.<sup>4</sup>

As we have seen, the emotions (*affectus*) were especially susceptible to the influence of memory images or "likenesses" (see above pp. 54-55). Although the memory treatises focus primarily upon imagery and pictures as memory aids, the late fourteenth-century poet John Gower, a contemporary of Chaucer, employs numerous *exempla* in his *Confessio Amantis* in order to provide his protagonist-- *Amans*-- with a memory structure that will effectively reform his moral character.<sup>5</sup>

#### Gower, Lydgate and the Moralization

In the prologue to the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower states that his purpose in writing "a bok" was to describe what took place "in olde

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<sup>4</sup> See A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 137.

<sup>5</sup> John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, edited by Russell A. Peck (Toronto, 1980). For an extensive analysis of Gower's rhetorical handling of *exempla* in the *Confessio Amantis* see Charles Runacres, "Art and Ethics in the *Exempla* of *Confessio Amantis*", in *Gower's Confessio Amantis: Responses and Reassessments*, edited by A.J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 106-134.



daies passed." These stories, in turn, reflect upon the moral status of the fourteenth-century audience and, as Gower puts it, show that things are in a "worse plit" now than they were in ancient times (pp. 2-3: 51-57). However, in addition to revealing the moral depravity of the fourteenth century, these ancient stories also work as a "Mirour of ensamplerie" which, if memorized, will function as a guide towards improving both the present and future conduct of their readers or hearers (p. 15: 496).

The various *exempla* in Gower's poem are "internalized", I believe, through a two-step mnemonic process: at the first hearing the *exempla* are apprehended by the imagination as *imagines*, secondly, as *Amans* reviews or recollects the stories he then establishes the "condition" or *habitus* of a trained memory which, if consistently exercised, will enable him to live a life of virtue (see above p. 84).<sup>6</sup>

The cumulative effect of having both heard and recollected the *exempla* may be observed near the conclusion of the poem when the narrator, *Amans*, encounters Venus-- his former lover-- only to find that the virtuous *habitus* of the recollected *exempla* has entirely displaced his sinful love (*cupiditas*) for the mutable goddess:

Venus behield me than and lowh,  
And axeth, as it were a game,

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<sup>6</sup> M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 64, "Memory is a proclivity or disposition ("*habitus*") of the soul rather than a power of activity itself . . . All virtues and vices are habits, good or bad . . . defining memory as *habitus* makes it the key linking term between knowledge and action, conceiving of good and doing it. Memory is an essential treasure house for both the intellect and virtuous action."

What love was. And I for schame  
 Ne wiste what I scholde ansuere;  
 And natheles I gan to swere  
*That be my trouthe I knew him noght;*  
*So ferr it was out of mi thoght,*  
*Riht as it hadde nevere be (VIII: 2870-2877).*

The displacement of the sinful love for Venus with the moral lessons or *intentio* of the *exempla* calls attention to Aquinas' view that memory "likenesses" (*imagines*) leave an actual physical imprint upon the brain's tissue-- like a seal imprinted upon wax (see above pp. 108-109).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the fact that these *exempla* have caused *Amans* to completely forget his infatuation for Venus underlines the crucial emotional component of memory images or likenesses. As M.J. Carruthers has put it, the memory image is both "sensorily derived and emotionally charged."<sup>8</sup> Not only have the *exempla* imposed a new set of sensory or bodily likenesses upon the memory-- thus obliterating the old likenesses of Venus-- their presence within *Amans*' memory has also destroyed the emotional charge which the bodily image of Venus exercised upon his *affectus*.

The memory "likenesses" of the *exempla* carry with them a new *intentio* or emotional "point of view" which has entirely restructured or reformed his memory and thought patterns (*habitus*) so that, in the words of *Amans*, it is as though his love for Venus "hadde nevere be" (see

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<sup>7</sup> See M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

above pp. 82-83).<sup>9</sup> In its place, the mnemonic "imprint" of the *exempla*, when developed through recollection, serves as a *habitus*, which-- as it was presented to the reason-- would enable *Amans* to choose the good over the bad. This memory structure or *habitus*-- although itself a passive faculty within the soul-- made it possible for the active reason to guide the individual towards virtue, as Aquinas observed: "every power [reason] which may be variously directed to act, needs a habit whereby it is well disposed to its act."<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to note that in describing *Amans'* condition Gower-- as with most medieval theologians-- aligns the "will" with the lower, sinful appetites, of wrongful desire (*cupiditas*).<sup>11</sup> He identifies "reason", along with Aquinas, as an active power which-- in league with a virtuous *habitus* or memory structure-- could control the "will" in order for the soul to act virtuously.<sup>12</sup> "Prudence" or "Wisdom"-- the virtue to which the poem's prologue is dedicated ("For this prologue is so assised/ That it to wisdom al belongeth" p. 3: 66-67)-- arises from the right action of the "reason" over the "will", it is an "intellectual virtue" which "perfects the emotional, desiring will."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53-54 "*Intentio* means opinion about or reaction to something. It also means something less definite, related to the concept in rhetorical and literary theory of "points of view".

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> John Bowers, *The Crisis of Will in Piers Plowman*, pp. 45,48.

<sup>12</sup> See *Confessio Amantis*, p. 464: 2060-2148.

<sup>13</sup> M.J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 66.

The importance of the trained memory to the exercise of prudence stems from the link between being prudent and having a store of remembered experiences-- that is, a trained memory or *habitus*. As Aquinas states, quoting Aristotle, "[prudence] is engendered and fostered by experience and time."<sup>14</sup> These "experiences" which enable one to act with prudence do not, as we might expect, refer only to one's personal history in the sense of lived events. As we have seen in Chapter IV, the medieval notion of experience also embraced the "re-living" of reading or listening "experiences" through recollection (see above pp. 94-95). Thus, although the *exempla* within Gower's poem all occur in the distant past, as they are "imprinted" upon *Amans'* memory through recollection, *Amans* achieves the "condition" (*habitus*) necessary to act with prudence-- that is, he enables reason to control and channel the desires of the will away from *cupiditas* to charity:

The organism's *habitus* is developed by the repetition of particular emotional responses [*intentio*] or acts performed in the past and remembered, which then predispose it to the same response in the future.<sup>15</sup>

The question which naturally arises from this definition of the *habitus* has to do with the problem of ensuring that the "responses" (*intentiones*) to the *exempla* which are remembered (and thus "re-experienced") are morally appropriate-- that is, understood *ex ratione*

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

or "from a considered judgement."<sup>16</sup> In other words, how can one be sure that when the listener or reader first hears the *exemplum* he will receive it with a morally correct *intentio*? Given the importance of the *intentio* to the formation of morally correct memory *habitus*-- which, in turn, supports the control of reason and the exercise of prudence-- it would be vitally important that an audience be guided in its initial reception of an *exemplum* so that as they recollected it the memory likenesses would "contain" morally appropriate "points of view" (*intentiones*).

M.J. Carruthers makes the important point that a memory likeness carried with it not only the objective bodily form of the "thing", but also the *intentio* which may be defined in terms of the individual's subjective response to the "experience" of first "seeing" the image or *exemplum* (see above pp. 82-83).<sup>17</sup> In the case of a figure such as *Amans* who-- to use Alexander of Hales' terminology-- displays the condition (*status*) of sinful love (*cupiditas*), there can be no guarantee that his response (*intentio*) to the *exempla* will be morally positive, since he is controlled not by reason but by his corrupted "will."

Gower appears to appreciate this problem, since after *Amans* has heard all of the *exempla*, he is portrayed as experiencing a mixed reaction to their moral import. On one hand he must admit that from the point of view of "reason" all the stories ably show that it is better to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

be "governed" by reason than by "will", but at the same time he finds it difficult not to cling to his *cupiditas*:

Tho was betwen mi Prest and me  
 Debat and gret perplexete:  
 Mi resoun understod him wel,  
 And knew it was soth everydel  
 That he hath seid, bot noght forthi  
 Mi will hath nothing set therby (VIII: 2189-  
 2194).

The only solution to this divided state is for *Amans* to experience a change in desire-- that is, a shift at the level of the *affectus* away from *cupiditas*. This change must be effected prior to him being able to form a morally correct *habitus* or trained memory, a condition necessary to the exercise of prudence. It will be recalled that in Chapter III the *affectus* was described as consisting of four primary emotions: delight, misery, love, and fear (see above p. 53). In order to move *Amans'* *affectus* towards a more pious disposition, a rhetorical device must be used which will extinguish his inflamed desire for Venus. This device emerges through Venus's rather abrupt reminder to *Amans* of his advanced age:

Forthi mi conseil is that thou  
 Remembre wel hou thou art old (VIII: 2438-2439).



*Amans* ponders this advice and comes to the painful realisation that he is an old man and not likely to profit from the worship of Venus, with this in mind his "fyr" of love is drenched with the cold emotion of "sorwe":

Whan Venus hath hir tale told,  
And I bethoght was al aboute,  
Tho wiste I wel withoute doute,  
That ther was no recoverir;  
And as a man the blase of fyr  
With water quencheth, so ferd I;  
A cold me cawhte sodeinly,  
For sorwe that myn herte made (VIII: 2440-2447).

With a genuine sense of loss at having been betrayed by the mutability of temporal love, *Amans* falls into a deep swoon and, as he sleeps, sees a condensed version of all the *exempla* presented to him earlier. However, this time instead of experiencing a conflict between his "will" and reason, *Amans* responds to the *exempla* from the new emotional state of "sorwe", a disposition which enables him to respond appropriately to the *exempla* and thus recollect them with a morally positive *intentio*. This morally positive recollection of the *exempla* establishes a *habitus* which, in turn, provides his reason with a store of "experiences" upon which to draw for the making of morally correct judgements. Gower makes these theoretical points clear in *Amans'* description of how, once the *affectus* has been rightly ordered, reason is able to take control of the "will" and remove the imprudent "fantasie" of *cupiditas*:

And whan Resoun it herde sein  
 That loves rage was aweie,  
 He cam to me the rihte weie,  
 And hath remued the sotie  
 Of thilke unwise fantasie,  
 Wherof that I was wont to pleigne,  
 So that of thilke fyri peine  
 I was mad sobre and hol ynowh (VIII: 2862-2869).

In reviewing the process whereby the *exempla* are established as *habitus* within *Amans'* memory (a process which parallels his moral reform), it appears that it involves at least three basic aspects: first, the reader or hearer simply receives, within his imagination, the initial "imprint" of the *imagines* or "phantasms", secondly, his response or "point of view" (*intentio*) towards the *exempla* is guided by the "moralization" provided by Venus, and thirdly with a correct disposition he recollects the *exempla* with a positive moral *intentio*, an activity which establishes a virtuous *habitus*.

A quite similar pattern of mnemonic reception occurs in Lydgate's *Daunce of Machabree* or "Dance of Death" where explicit references to the *Ars memorandi* suggest that in the use of *exempla* a "moralization" or "considered judgement" was commonly applied to the end of narratives in order to guide audience response (*intentio*). Lydgate introduces the various "dances of death" with reference to those persons in his audience who are as "hard hearted as a stone", a condition which--

because it prevents the exercise of prudence-- blinds them to their own mortality:

O YE folkes hard hearted as a stone,  
 Whiche to this worlde geue al your aduertence,  
 Lyke as it should euer lasten in one,--  
 Where is your wit, where is your prouidence  
 To seen aforne the sodayn violence  
 Of cruel death . . .<sup>18</sup>

As a solution to their hard-hearted blindness, Lydgate advises his audience to consider the "dances of death" and to imprint them upon their memories:

Considereth this, ye folkes that been wyse,  
 And it *emprinteth in your memoriall*,  
 Like the ensample which that at Parise  
 I fonde depict ones vppon a wal  
 Full notably, as I rehearse shall (p. 1026: 17-21).

In these lines Lydgate provides evidence of the medieval tendency to consider the pictorial or plastic image as functionally the same as the mental image or metaphor. Lydgate offers his audience a narrative "rehearsal" of what was originally a wall-painting: the media are different in terms of their artistic expression, but they are the same once they have been "imprinted" upon the memory. The differences

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<sup>18</sup> *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, edited by Henry Bergen, volume three, books VI-IX (Washington D.C. 1923), p. 1025: 1-6.

between seeing a picture and hearing that picture described as narrative do not concern Lydgate, his attention is fixed upon the use or-- to borrow Augustine's terminology-- the "use" of the figural *res* or *exempla* as a means to establishing a virtuous "memoriall" (*habitus*). Once the virtuous *habitus* is secure in the mind, it acts as a "mirrour" which stands before the reason and informs its control of the will.<sup>19</sup>

In describing the intention behind the making of his translation of the "Frenche Machabrees" dance, Lydgate makes explicit the working together of the trained memory or *habitus* and reason in his reference to the memorized "dance of death" as a mirror which stands before the reason. Lydgate makes it clear that when proud "folkes" look into this "mirror" they will see the ugliness of their own deaths:

To make a playn translacion  
 In English tonge, of entencion  
 That proude folkes that bene stout and bolde,  
*As in a mirrour toforne in her reason*  
*Her vgly fine there clearly may beholde* (p. 1026: 28-32).

At the conclusion of his "rehearsal" of the "dance of death", Lydgate summarizes the dialogues between each of the "estates" and death with a picture of a king whose worm-infested corpse acts as a "resemblance" of the fate of all the estates. Lydgate explains that

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<sup>19</sup> See Susan K. Hagen, *Allegorical Rememberance*, pp. 50-51: "If we infer accurately from various medieval texts, the process of hearing a story and envisioning it in one's mind's eye was so much a thing of expectation, so much accepted as a mode of comprehending narrative, that the medieval writer could move with impunity from verbs of reading and hearing to verbs of seeing and imagining."

the "portrature" of the king "ligging eaten of Worms" shows the audience their true nature, a revelation Lydgate specifically refers to as a "mirroure" which he then invites the audience to hold in "remembraunce":

YE folke that loke vpon this portrature,  
 Beholding here all estates daunce,  
 Seeth what ye been & what is your nature:  
 Meat vnto wormes; nought els in substaunce.  
*And haueth this mirroure aye in remembraunce,*  
 Howe I lye here whylom crowned [a] kyng,  
 To al estates a true resemblaunce,  
 That wormes foode is fine of our living (p. 1043: 633-640).

However, the impression of this picture upon the memory of the death image would not necessarily evoke a morally positive response on the part of the audience. As it stands, the picture of the worm-eaten king certainly would "contain" the emotion or *intentio* of fear, but there could be little guarantee that this emotion would lead to virtuous action. Using roughly the same technique as Gower, Lydgate provides-- at the conclusion of the initial hearing of the *exempla*-- an explicit moralization which supplements the bodily or sensory "imprint" of the the various images with a morally appropriate *intentio*. Lydgate guides his audience's response to the "mirroure" of the dead king by supplying them with an assessment of the sensory memory image, a response or "point of view" (*intentio*) which they are to incorporate within their memory of the sensory imprint of the "daunce":

Mans lyfe is nought els, platly for to thinke,

But as a winde which is transitory,  
 Passing ay forth, whether he wake or winke,  
 Toward this daunce, haueth this in memorye,  
 Rememberyng aye there is no better victory  
 In this life here than fle syn at the least (p. 1043: 641-  
 646).

Lydgate's phrasing of his concluding moralization strongly suggests an awareness, on his part, of the necessity for ensuring that the "memory" of the "dance" is supplemented by "rememberyng" that the best way to live is to "fle syn." The emotion of fear which the image of the dead king evokes and "contains" might "move" the listener to "wanhope" or spiritual despair. In view of this possibility the moralization is provided by Lydgate as the essential "response" or *intentio* which the audience must have "toward this daunce."

It is interesting to note that both Gower and Lydgate place their audience in the position of experiencing a strong emotion just prior to their successfully recollecting and establishing a positive moral *habitus*. In the case of *Amans* the emotion is "sorwe", in Lydgate's text the picture of the dead king evokes a strong sense of fear or foreboding. In both cases these emotions appear to function in terms of a necessary stage preparatory to the reception of the prudential moralization or "considered judgement." Lydgate and Gower initially portray their "audiences" as "blind" or "hard-hearted" in disposition, yet after hearing the *exempla* they are "moved" towards a more positive disposition which marks a vital step to the completion of a morally correct response (*intentio*). The emotions of "<sup>sorwe</sup>~~sorwe~~" or "fear" are themselves part of



the overall *intentio* contained by the memory "likenesses" of the *exempla*, but the *intentio* cannot be described as morally complete until the audience has also responded affirmatively to the moralization of the *exempla*. With a morally complete response (*intentio*)-- embodied, as it were, by the memory "likenesses" imprinted on the brain-- the individual would then be able to exercise his memory (*habitus*) as the necessary pre-condition to the exercise of prudence.

If we compare the *exemplum* with the structuring schematic image or metaphor, it becomes apparent that in the case of the *exemplum* the reader's response to the narrative does not necessarily include a "considered judgement" of the narrative's ethical or doctrinal message. As we have seen in the case of *Amans*, a reader may respond emotionally to *exempla*, but in order for him to appropriate the narratives or narrative as a morally correct *habitus* he may require "hands-on" guidance in the form of an explicit "moralization" from the preacher or compiler. With the schematic image, the anatomization and doctrinal tagging of the various parts of the image ensures that a close union is maintained between "picture and precept". Even the potentially narrative progression within such a tree-image from, say, root-trunk-branch-leaves and finally to fruit or, as in the case of Langland's allegorical "way to Truth", from outside the castle to within its walls, consistently merge the media with the message.

In the use of the *exemplum* the greater "distance" between the narrative and its didactic moralization allows for an initial emotive and subjective response on the part of the audience towards the narrative, a response which, as we have seen, the skillful narrator is

quick to channel towards a more "objective" and didactically ethical judgement of the tale's meaning. In the *Confessio Amantis* Gower incorporates *Amans'* initial subjective response as part of the larger narrative frame of the work itself, a technique which allows him-- as compiler-- then to guide *Amans* towards an morally sound response to the *exempla*. A similar technique occurs in Langland's allegory of the figural journey to Truth in Passus V, where after having presented the alternative entrances to the castle-- the "posternes" guarded by the seven remedial virtues-- Langland portrays the full emotional response of the "kuttefurs", the "apeward", and the "wafrester", and then uses their rather despairing emotions as an opportunity for Piers to explain the role of both the Virgin Mary and Christ as intercessors for those who lack virtue (see above pp. 153-154).

In both of these instances response to the *exempla* or allegory is itself represented as part of the over all structure of the work. The various *exempla* in the *Confessio Amantis* are effectively stories within the "larger story" of *Amans'* progression from sinful love to love for God. Likewise the depiction of the figural journey in Passus V stands within the larger narrative framework involving a confused fictional audience anxious to find their way to Truth. This technique easily shrinks the "distance" between the narrative and the didactic message which follows it, since (in both examples) once the *exempla* have been related or the "way to Truth" described, there is still the expectation-- on our part-- that we will be shown how the stories or figural images "answer" to the needs of fictional audience. We see Gower using this audience expectation in the *Confessio Amantis* in order to ensure that with the end of the "story-telling" phase of his work (the *exempla*) he

is still able to hold his audience's attention by shifting back to the larger narrative context of *Amans'* confession. From the didactic point of view, this shift allows Gower to place the moralization or didactic message within the larger narrative as an *event* rather than having to tack it onto the ending of the last *exemplum* as an after-statement.

This strategy of placing stories within a story-- in addition to increasing the chances that the audience will "pay attention" to the didactic moralization-- potentially controls the audience's subjective response to the *exempla* through the depiction of the fictional audience's response. In a sense, *Amans'* fictional response to the *exempla* sets a precedent for all subsequent reader responses to the stories. Perhaps, in a vicarious sense, *Amans'* response becomes the response of the reading or listening audience as they initially receive and then recollect the book, a situation which allows Gower to not only accurately "read" *Amans'* spiritual condition, but at the same time to condition the response of his diverse reading audience. In other words, through his "stories within a story" strategy Gower attempts to insure a close "fit"-- with reference to all potential readers-- between the emotional "charge" of the *exempla* and his moralization.

Within the more general context of teaching the sacrament of penance, the time and place of Gower's narrative-- the confessional-- allow him to focus upon a single individual and treat his particular problem, but in offering this narrative as a "bok" for a wider reading audience Gower potentially extends the private and personal nature of the instruction which took place within the confessional to each member of his reading public. Rather than addressing an audience made up of

various types of sinners with a series of *exempla* and an appropriate moralization, Gower, in his use of the narrative frame of the confessional, approaches each member of his audience individually, inviting them to remember not only the *exempla*, but also the dramatic spectacle of *Amans* as he is guided towards a correct response and judgement of both the *exempla* and his own life. Essentially, Gower speaks universally to all men and their various conditions insofar as he confines his teaching to the story of one man, *Amans*, achieving didactic comprehensiveness by placing the didactic message of the *exempla* within the personal context of the private confessional. This success, as we shall see in the penitential *exempla* which follow, was considerably more difficult to achieve within the literary form of the sermon, where-- because of the formally public nature of the discourse-- the preacher had to speak to the members of an audience not as individuals, but as members of a far-from-homogeneous group.

### **Exempla of the Saved**

The penitential *exempla* are easily divided into the two main groups of those tales which portray salvation and those which show sinners being damned. *Exempla* which end with the salvation of the protagonist would have had special application to those members of an audience who suffered from spiritual despair or "wanhope." With respect to this "audience" of despairing sinners, the correct response or *intentio* towards such *exempla* would be that of renewed hope in salvation.

However, within the context of the actual preaching occasion there could be no guarantee that the audience would consist only of those who were despairing, a point, it will be recalled, that Henry of Ghent stressed in his debate against Alexander of Hales' notion that the Scripture caters to the various conditions (*status*) of mankind (see above pp. 55-56). Henry's argument against Alexander cites the impracticability of trying to ensure that a sermon would instruct only a select number of individuals within the larger audience. As Henry puts it, the truth should be passed on in its totality "everywhere", not just in parts and pieces in order to suit the emotional conditions of specific groups or persons (see above p. 59). However, while Henry's argument certainly applies to the intellectual condition of an audience-- he asserts that the "literal sense" caters to the ignorant, the "spiritual senses" appeal to the "learned"-- it fails to meet the challenge posed by the emotional states of despair and presumption, the two emotional poles which defined the area of penitential instruction.<sup>20</sup>

The penitential *exempla*, for the most part, were employed by preachers or compilers to target-- with an appropriate narrative-- either the despairing or presumptuous within the audience-- these writers, along with Alexander, recognized the need to speak to specific types of sinners *within* the larger audience. At the same time, usually

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<sup>20</sup> See Lee W. Patterson, "Chaucerian Confession: Penitential Literature and the Pardoner", *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 7 (1976), 153-173 (p. 159): "*Idcirco te alloquor, ut sperare doceam et timere* says Augustine to Petrarch in the *Secretum Meum*, and he warns him against excesses of both hope (*praesumptio*) and fear (*desperatio*). Presumption and despair are the Scylla and Charbydis of the spiritual life, the Devil's greyhounds, in the words of the *Ancrene Riwe*, "igedered to gederes . . . nexst .e .ete of helle."

as part of the moralization or final commentary of the *exemplum*, the narrator may often try to ensure that those for whom the *exemplum* is *not* intended-- whether presumptuous or despairing-- do not take the moralization of the tale as though it were applicable to them. Thus, as we shall see in the penitential *exempla* discussed in the remainder of this Chapter, there is a sense in which the preacher or narrator attempts-- sometimes through the use of the moralization alone-- to rhetorically divide or segregate his audience. However, where Gower and Langland succeed in making their penitential discourse "fit" the diverse audience by incorporating a fictional audience's response within the larger narrative frame, other penitential writers fail. The following example, although not strictly speaking an *exemplum*, demonstrates some of the rhetorical problems which could be encountered in the writing of a penitential allegory where the protagonist is depicted as having been saved on the basis of a death-bed contrition.

The *Castle of Perseverance*, a medieval morality play, raises the issue of the forensic and remedial functions of penance at its conclusion where the protagonist, Mankynde, faces judgement after a life of habitual sinning.<sup>21</sup> The life of Mankynde may be divided into a four-part narrative structure of temptation, fall, repentance, and mercy. However, this plot occurs twice within the play, first as the standard penitential process (complete with a "text-book" account of contrition, confession, and absolution) and secondly in the dying moments of sinful Mankynde as he cries out for mercy at the very moment of death. The vital component in these two penitential processes is, of

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<sup>21</sup> *Four Morality Plays*, edited by Peter Happe (Harmondsworth, 1987), pp. 81-210.



course, contrition. In the first instance Mankynde is accorded absolution (remission of sins) only after he has demonstrated the external signs of true contrition *and* stated his resolve to forsake his former sins. However, the cycle is repeated as Mankynde falls to a second round of temptations, only this time the sins become habitual and it is not until the very end of his life that we again witness Mankynde repenting of his sins and crying for mercy.

Thus far I have stressed the attempts made by vernacular compilers to integrate the forensic and remedial functions of the sacrament of penance. The writer of the *Castle of Perseverance* demonstrates, in Mankynde's first confession, a thorough awareness of the forensic and remedial, and is careful to integrate them within Mankynde's confession. However, the remedial function of penance is potentially undermined by Mankynde's death-bed show of contrition and subsequent gain of eternal life. Taking into account the didactic function of the *Castle of Perseverance*, this conclusion to the allegory-- although certainly an encouragement to those members of the audience prone to spiritual despair-- would tend to subvert the first penitential scene of the play, especially in the minds of those members of an audience who were presumptuous in their attitudes towards personal sin.

The potential "inconsistency" or tension between the two penitential scenes represented in the play is exacerbated, I believe, by the use of the term "Mankynde" to refer to a life experience which, rather than being the "norm" for all penitents, should have been viewed as the exception. In orthodox terms, the success of Mankynde's belated contrition would not have been viewed, at least in pedagogical terms, as

having universal application to all would-be penitents. To think in such terms would, I think, be tantamount to undermining the remedial function of the sacrament of penance.

There is sufficient evidence within the first penitential scene to show an integration of the forensic and remedial functions of penance. Indeed, the dramatization of Mankynde's penitence stands as an *exemplum* of what the "good" confession should consist of, including the standard signs of contrition, a complete and open confession, and finally a clear statement of resolve to stop sinning. Furthermore, the dramatized dialogue between the various players, both good and evil, reveals with considerable detail what may have been contemporary attitudes towards penance and especially the works of satisfaction. After Mankynde has embraced the seven deadly sins following the first temptation (pp. 89-128: 1-1290), his bad angel (*Malus angelus*) refutes the good angel (*Bonus angelus*) with the argument that Mankynde has chosen sin in view of the barrenness and hardship which the doing of penances involves: in short there is no good reason ("chesun") for the attempting to live the life of penitence:

*MALUS ANGELUS:* No, Good Aungyl, thou art not in sesun,  
 Fewe men in the feyth they fynde.  
 For thou hast schewyd a ballyd resun,  
 Good syre, cum blowe myn hol be-hynde.  
 Trewly man hatte non chesun  
 On thi God to grede and grynde,  
 For that schuld cunne Cristis lessoun  
 In penaunce hys body he muste bynde

And forsake the worldys mende.  
 Men arn loth on the to crye  
 Or don penaunce for here folye.  
 Therefore have I now maystrye  
 Welny ovyr al mankynde (p. 128: 1278-1290).

It should be noted that the primary reason which *Malus angelus* cites for the lack of interest in "Christus lessoun" is the aversion of most persons to the discipline of the remedial function of penance-- the works of satisfaction. Twice *Malus Angelus* singles out penances as the reason for man's preference for the life of sin: first as bodily discipline, and secondly simply as doing penance for "folye." The general distaste for doing one's penances, argues *Malus Angelus*, hardly qualifies as an incentive for becoming a good Christian, and for this reason evil has the mastery "welny over al mankynde."

Considering the tenor of Mankynde's life, it would be difficult to find a view of Mankynde which more accurately defined his moral priorities. Moreover, *Malus Angelus'* assessment of man's attitude towards works of satisfaction points directly at the practical impediment which makes it difficult-- in terms of the everyday experience-- to integrate the forensic with the remedial. This practical difficulty, as well as being identified by *Malus Angelus*, is also exemplified in Mankynde's life, since while he successfully completes the stages of contrition and confession and is absolved, he fails almost inevitably-- it seems-- to carry through with doing penance-- that is, he fails to perform the remedial function of penance.

Mankynde's confession demonstrates clearly the necessary external signs of contrition: sighs, crying, and pleas for mercy:

*Humanum Genus*: A sete of sorwe in me is set:

Sertys for synne I syhe sore . . .

In wepynge wo my wele is wet . . .

A, mercy, Schryfte! I wyl no more [sin] (pp. 132-133: 1408-1409, 1412, 1430).

Furthermore, in response to Schryfte's warning that if he sins again he should repeat his confession and penances, Mankynde confidently claims that he will amend his life:

*Humanum Genus*: Nay, sertys that schal I not do,

Schryfte, thou schalt the sothe se,

For thow Mankynde be wonte ther-to

I wyl now al a-mende me (p. 133: 1447-1450).

With the external signs of contrition and the resolve to stop sinning, Mankynde receives absolution from Schryfte:

I the a-soyle wyth good entent

Of alle the synnes that thou hast wrowth (p. 135: 1512-1513).

The sequence of contrition, confession, statement of intention to reform, and then absolution follows that outlined in the Latin penitential manuals. However, with his sins fully remitted, Mankynde

must now look to working out the amendment which he promised Schryfte he would carry out. Thus, immediately following the pronouncement of absolution Mankynde asks Schryfte to lead him to a place of safety where he may be protected from temptation and further sinning:

Now Syr Schryfte, where may I dwell  
 To kepe me fro synne and wo?  
 A comly counseyl ye me spelle  
 To fende me now fro my foo (p. 136: 1538-1541).

This implicit acknowledgement of the inherent vulnerability of the third part of the sacrament-- the works of satisfaction and the cultivation of the seven remedial virtues-- grapples with the problem of how to live one's life after absolution. Schryfte's response is, of course, to offer Mankynde refuge in the "Castel of Perseveraunce" where he makes acquaintance with the seven remedial virtues, resolving to live more frugally and forsake the seven sins:

What schuld I more monys make?  
 The sevene synnys I forsake  
 And to these vij vertuis I me take (p. 141: 1696-1698).

Mankynde's concern that he be protected from further sinning finds a close parallel in Langland's depiction in Passus XIV of Haukyn, the Active man, whose visits to the confessional have not enabled him to break free from a life of habitual sin. In response to Conscience's question as to why his coat is so heavily soiled, Haukyn replies that

although he has been to the priest and been "shryven", he has been unable to keep his coat clean even for an hour after absolution:

And kouthe I nevere, by Crist, kepen it clene an houre  
That I ne soiled it with sighte or som ydel speche,  
Or thorough werk or thorough word, or wille of myn herte  
that I ne flobre it foule for morwe til even (XIV: 12-15).

Haukyn's situation is addressed by Conscience and Patience who both promise to teach Haukyn how to avoid sin. The extended lesson which follows, rather than emphasizing the works of satisfaction or even the remedial virtues, instead focuses upon poverty as a way of life which--by its very nature-- protects the penitent from pride, the "root" of all the seven deadly sins. As Patience explains, poverty is penance, and just as contrition is the cure of the soul (*cura animarum*) so poverty as penance is "pure spiritual healthe":

Poverté is the firste point that Pride moost hateth  
Thanne is it good by good skile al that agasteth pride  
Right as contricion is comfortable thyng . . .  
And a sorwe of hymself, and a solace to the soule  
So poverty propreliche penaunce is to the body  
And joye also to the soule, pure spiritual helthe,  
And contricion confort, and *cura animarum* (XIV: 280-285).

The transition from the "cure of the soul" (contrition) to spiritual health (penances and the reformed life) is made, according to Patience, as the penitent embraces the life of poverty.



In Passus VII, following Piers' tearing of the Pardon, we find another instance where poverty is appealed to as perhaps the only way of life which can meet the stringent demands of "Do wel and have wel . . . Do yvel and have yvel" (VII: 112-113):

I shal cessen of my sowyng, quod Piers, and swynke noght so harde,

Ne aboute my bely joye so bisy be na moore;

Of preieres and of penaunce my plough shal ben hereafter,

And wepen whan I sholde slepe, though whete breed me faille

(VII: 118-121).

Piers' resolve to work "noght so harde" nor to be so "bisy" about his "bely" parallels, I believe, Mankynde's rhetorical question which he states as he forsakes the sin of covetousness, "what schuld I more monys make?" (p. 141: 1696). However, unlike Langland, the theme of poverty as "proprefliche penaunce" is not developed in the *Castle of Perseverance*. The initial resolve on the part of Mankynde to live more frugally-- thereby avoiding the sin of covetousness-- is not translated in the allegory into the practical terms of "lifestyle" as it is in the case of Haukyn. Instead Mankynde's battle with sin is just that, a *psychomachia* of fighting vices and virtues.

It should be noted that Haukyn-- by profession a "wafrestere" (XIII: 224-226)-- falls into that class of individuals who, in the schematic castle image of Passus V, are not "sib" to the seven remedial virtues (see above pp. 147-149). Piers' immediate response to the kuttepur's, apeward's and wafrestere's questions and potential despair over their

lack of virtue is to emphasize the availability of mercy. However, in the presentation of Haukyn in Passus XIII and XIV Langland returns to the wafrestere-- and by implication the other members of his class-- in order to instruct them further concerning how they may become "sib" to the remedial virtues-- that is, how to live *after* they have been absolved. More importantly, however, Patience offers Haukyn-- a figure unrelated to the remedial virtues and thus unlikely to enter into the castle-- a penitential regimen which is both practical, simple and which, as a lifestyle, encourages all the remedial virtues.

Another emphasis upon poverty as "penance" is also found in *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of Manhode*. At the beginning of the figural pilgrimage the narrator finds himself before the "citee of Jerusalem" where he witnesses the attempts by different classes of penitents to gain entrance to the heavenly city. As with two types of entrances to Langland's schematic castle in Passus V, those who would enter the city have the option of going through either a main gate-- in this case the gate of "martyrdom"-- or by any number of alternative means such as ladders or knotted ropes provided by various saints for their devotees (pp. 2-3: 50-82). However, the gate which affords the easiest entry is the door "litel and streyt" which admits only the poor, a group identified by their nakedness:

pe entre was wunder subtile, and eche wight oncloped him and  
naked him at pe entringe. Pere men mihten fynde olde robes  
gret plente, for perbi passede non cloped . . . Miche likede  
me pis passage for pe commune avauntage bat alle folk hadden  
pere if pei bicumen verrey poore . . . *þ*is thing ouhte wel

to like, for þer is not miche to doone: þer was neuere noon  
so riche þat he ne may be poore if he wole; and certeyn good  
it is to be it, for to entre þerbi into swich a dwellinge,  
and good it were to faste a litel for to haue ful saulee at  
þe sopere (p. 3: 90-103).

This scene-- and the salvific power of poverty-- is recalled to the narrator at the very end of the pilgrimage when, as an old and dying man, he is confronted with his past life and reminded of his early desire to enter through the gate of the naked poor:

pou art at þe wiket and at þe dore þat pou seygh  
sumtime in þe mirrour. If pou be dispoiled and naaked, pou  
shalt be resceyued withinne. pou haddest wel chier pilke  
entree at þe first whan pou seigh it, and algates so michel  
I sey þee þat pou crye mercy to my fader in biheetinge to  
Penitence þat pouh pou haue noght doon hire sufficiencye,  
gladliche pou wolt don it hire in purgatorie þere pou shalt  
go too (p. 174: 7257-7264).

In this passage "Grace Dieu"-- the narrator's guide-- specifically cites his original good intentions to become one of the poor who enter easily through the small door, Grace Dieu then contrasts this intention with his actual choice to follow the way of covetousness and thereby avoid the doing of penances. However, Grace Dieu counsels the narrator that since his intentions were sincere, he may "crye mercy" to God and promise to make up for his neglect of penances in Purgatory.

While both *Piers* and *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode* deal extensively and realistically with the problem of how to avoid habitual sinning after absolution (in other words how to implement the "works of satisfaction"), they do not tell us the ultimate salvific fate of their penitents. The narrator of *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode* does not reach purgatory nor, indeed, heaven, since his pilgrimage ends as he awakes from his dream. Similarly, we leave Haukyn in a state of full contrition-- "he wepte water . . . siked ful ofte . . . and cride mercy faste" (XIV: 324,326,330) and, in view of his shame for past sins, vowing to forgo the wearing of clothes-- a statement which may, I believe, be understood to mean that he will adopt the "penance" of poverty:

I were noght worthi, woot God, quod Haukyn, to werien any  
clothes,

Ne neither sherte ne shoon, save for shame one

To covere my careyne, quod he . . . (XIV: 329-331).

Haukyn's willing adoption of the lifestyle of the "naked" penitent (the penance of poverty) echoes the metaphor of nakedness as the qualification for entrance into heaven found in *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode*. Yet, even in view of this apparent adoption of Patience's advice concerning poverty, Langland cautiously avoids giving us any certainty regarding Haukyn's salvific fate. As I suggested in Chapter II, this lack of conclusive penitential endings may well have been a rhetorical technique designed to keep readers' attention fixed upon their own, as yet unresolved, penitential experience (see above pp. 21). However, the technique also avoids the difficult task of having to

show how a penitent, such as Haukyn, would have maintained his poverty and thus avoided repeated sinning. It is one thing-- as we have seen in the case of Mankynde-- to depict the penitent as contrite and resolved to do good, it is quite another to show him actually carrying out his resolve over the space of his entire lifetime.

Although in the *Castle of Perseverance* Mankynde chooses wealth over poverty and thus falls to the deadly sins, at the conclusion of the narrative he cries for mercy on his death-bed and is granted eternal life. However, as Mankynde has failed to live the penitential life, his salvation rests completely upon his last-minute cry for mercy:

Now swet Aungel, what is thi red?

The ryth red thou me reche.

Now my body is dressyd to ded

Helpe now me and be my leche.

Dyth thou me fro develys drede.

Thy worthy weye thou me teche.

I hope that God wyl helpyn and be myn hed

For "mercy" was my laste speche;

Thus made my body hys ende (p. 188: 3045-3053).

Mankynde's fate is decided in a debate between the four daughters of God (Mercy, Justice, Peace, and Truth). Mercy, appealing to God's grace towards sinners, is opposed by Justice and Truth who-- pointing to the subversion not only of justice, but also of the remedial function of penance-- cite the dangerous precedent of allowing an habitual sinner into heaven:

I, Trewthe, wyl that he goo to pyne.  
 Of that synne cowde he not blynne,  
 Therefore he schal hys sowle tyne  
 To the pytte of hell.  
 Ellys schuld we, bothe Trewthe and Ryt wysnes,  
 Be put to ovyr mekys dystresse,  
*And every man schuld be the wers*  
*That ther-of myth here tell* (p. 194: 3221-3228).

Interestingly, the compiler of the play displays an awareness, in this passage, of the rhetorical danger inherent to the depiction of sinners being saved solely on the basis of mercy, an admittance which, as we shall see, applies particularly to the ending of the *Castle of Perseverance*. Justice's rather keen sense of the rhetorical problems associated with conclusive salvation-endings surfaces again as Truth warns of the dangerous precedent which the salvation of Mankynde would set. If late repentance is rewarded with salvation, (again the rhetorical problem of the "mode matching the objective" is raised) men will sin with the presumption of being saved, a state which would render their sins unpardonable:

Late repentaunce if man save scholde  
 Weytheyr he wrouth wel or wychydesse,  
 Thanne every man wold be bolde  
 To trespass in trost of forgevenesse.  
 For synne in hope is dampnyd, I holde;  
 For-gevyn is nevere hys trespasse (p. 197: 3303-3308).



Both Justice's and Truth's arguments against the saving of Mankynde refer to the possible rhetorical effect such a precedent would have on those who would hear of it-- that is, the audience of the *Castle of Perseverance* itself. But after having made the rhetorical tensions between Justice and Mercy, despair and presumption, and the remedial and forensic functions so explicit within the four daughters' debate, the compiler of the play depicts Mankynd as being saved, a conclusion which, I think, effectively collapses these tensions and potentially subverts the claims not only of Justice, but also the remedial function of penance, effects which, in turn, easily lead to an attitude of presumption with regards to sin.

However, the compiler does not completely neglect the rhetorical problem of the dangerous precedent he has set, and in God's final words to the now-saved Mankynde we see an attempt to pre-empt a presumptuous "response" or *intentio* being applied to the play:

*Pater sedens in Iudicio: . . .*

My mercy, Mankynd, geve I the.

Cum syt at my ryth honde.

Ful wel have I lovyd the,

Unkynd thow I the fonde.

As a spark of fyre in the se

My mercy is synne-quenchand.

Thou hast cause to love me

A-bovyn al thyng in land,

And kepe my comaundement.

If thou me love and drede

Hevene schal be thi mede . . . (p. 208: 3643-3654).

Ostensibly this final speech is meant for Mankynde, but although the first six lines indicate that Mankynde is about to enter heaven, the following lines shift from a salvation which has been secured to one which remains conditional upon Mankynde's future yet-to-be-performed, good works. This blurring of the causal sequence-- Mankynde is dead and therefore is no longer in a position to "reform" his life-- may be partly explained if we consider that the "Mankynde" addressed here is not the protagonist, but the audience. Yet, although the speech certainly applies to "Mankynde" as it does to the audience, it is addressed specifically to "Mankynde" the protagonist, a situation which, in rhetorical terms, suggests a serious mis-match of the "mode" and the "objective." This rhetorical mis-alignment applies to the play as a whole, since-- as the moralization of the allegory makes painfully clear-- the way in which Mankynde was saved cannot support, as a representation of penance, both the forensic and remedial functions of the sacrament. The moralization, which includes as its primary feature a recitation of the Athanasian creed, reveals the rhetorical failure of the play to ensure that the mode of discourse would "fit" what, in penitential terms, were the two polarities of the medieval audience: presumption and despair:

*Et qui egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam, qui vero mala in  
ignem eternum.*

And thei that wel do in thys werld, here welthe schal a-  
wake;

In hevene thei schal be heynd in bounte and blys;

And thei that evyl do, thei schul to helle lake . . .

*Ther is no wyth in this werld that may scape this.*

*All men example here-at may take*

*To mayntein the goode and mendyn here mys* (pp. 209-210:  
3686-3695).

The moralization or rhetorical establishment of a correct *intentio* (response or "point of view") stands in direct opposition to the outcome of the play. Instead of rhetorically integrating the forensic and remedial functions of penance, and maintaining the tension between presumption and despair (the "state of dread", see above p. 14) the compiler undermines the remedial and, in turn, potentially encourages the attitude of presumption in his depiction of a saved Mankynde, an individual who manifestly did not "wel do" and who, in direct contradiction of the Athanasian creed, did manage to "skape" the demands of justice.

The *exemplum* which follows, taken from W.O. Ross's edition of a collection of Middle English sermons, demonstrates yet another, and rather more successful, technique for using the moralization of a tale to maintain the tension between the polarities of presumption and despair.<sup>22</sup> The story, found in sermon twenty-nine, concerns a prostitute who has been told that she is soon to be visited by her brother-- a religious hermit. Fearing the possible consequences of such a meeting, the prostitute endeavors to present a better front by sending her lovers out of the district in the vain hope that her brother will

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<sup>22</sup> *Middle English Sermons: Edited from British Museum MS. Royal 18 B. xxiii*, edited by Woodburn O. Ross, OS 209, E.E.T.S. (London, 1940).

fail to identify her lifestyle. However, upon arrival the hermit brother wastes no time in making it clear that he both knows about his sister's life of sin and fully intends to warn her of its consequences:

"Suster", he seid, "latt þis liff þat is foule and abhominable to God. And many soules ben lost þorow þe, and þin also. How may þou suffur þe turment and þe bitturnes and þe grett peynes þat bene ordeynt to þoo synners? For þe fende shall be fulfilled with hem þat he draweþ to synne, and þei shall be is fode, and þei shall brenne for euermore with þe fende in þe fyre of hell" (p. 148: 25-32).

The predominant theme of judgement and torment in Hell has a visible effect upon the wayward sister who, with considerable distress, asks the brother how she might find salvation:

And when þat she herd þis, she trembled and seid, "Broþur canst þou not tell me how þat I myght com to sauacion?" (p. 148: 32-34).

The brother responds to the sister's plea with the admonition that "God wold not withdraw is goodnes for noon ~~þat~~ <sup>he</sup>at will ask it with good will" (p. 148: 35-36). Significantly, the sister chooses to follow her brother, with the comment that she cannot bear to stay in the place where she had sinned so grievously:

And she seid, "I had leuer to die þan to goy aʒeyne to þat stede þer I haue don somuche harme" (p. 149: 1-2).

This willingness to leave the "place" of sin corresponds with the remedial emphasis of the sacrament of penance, consequently the brother, while counseling the sister to maintain a "steadfaste beleue" and "fast to crie God mercy", does not assign penances (p. 149: 3-4). In short, although the sister's repentance has not followed what would be considered the text-book stages of "contrition, confession and satisfaction", she has demonstrated the necessary repentance and resolve to reform her life.

The *exemplum* continues with an interesting twist when, as the brother and sister are travelling together, they see some travellers coming from the opposite direction. The brother, fearing that the travellers will think that the sister is his mistress, orders her to find another path:

And men com aʒeyns in the vey, and he seid to hure, "For Godes loue, sustur, withdrawe þe and goy anopur veye; for þise folke will els seye þat ʒe are my leman, and ʒe goy in my companye." And she did so (p. 149: 5-8).

After the travellers have passed by, the brother calls to the sister to rejoin him, unfortunately the brother discovers that (for reasons not made entirely clear) the sister has died:

And whan þe men were passed, he called hure and she spake  
not. Ðan he com aȝeyn and south hur, and founde hure dede,  
and hure fete all blodie, as she had folowid hym in þe hard  
vey (p. 149: 8-12).

This ending-- however regrettable from the protagonist's point of view--  
is typical of the penitential *exempla* where the death of protagonists  
must preclude any suggestion of categorical salvation or damnation. In  
the case of the sister, however, the brother has some doubts concerning  
whether or not she could be saved. The matter is resolved when, after  
consulting with a fellow hermit, the brother is shown by "reuelacion"  
that, indeed, his sister was saved:

Ðan hure broþur was ful sory and buried hure and vente is  
vey to an-nobur holy herymyte, for he was in dowte wheþur  
þat she was saved or not. But God shewed hem by reuelacion  
þat she was saved . . . (p. 149: 13-16).

The moralization which follows the *exemplum* identifies the basis  
upon which the woman was saved, and particular mention is made of her  
sacrifice in leaving all her possessions and of her disregard for her  
own safety. The narrator seems to suggest that her death demonstrates a  
willingness to suffer bodily for sins which, appropriately, were  
committed in "the flesh." Finally, we are reminded of her "gret  
repentaunce" and her choice to leave her former way of life:

She was saved for þat she leftte all þat she hade and ȝede so  
naked avey, and ȝaue no kepe to hure bodie, and dispised all



þe good þat she gat afore with hure bodie, and left it be-  
hynde hure. And for þe gret repentaunce . . . and for þat  
she folowid hure broþur withe good will and lefte hure  
synne, þer-for Criste ȝaue hem knalage that hure synnes were  
forȝeue hure (p. 149: 16-24).

Having explained the basis for the woman's salvation, the narrator uses the *exemplum* in order to show how quickly a sinner may be reformed.

Behold now how sone þat man may amend hym for all maner of  
trespase þat man dothe aȝeynes God þat begynnep to amend hym  
with good will (p. 149: 25-27).

However, having made this didactic point, the narrator swiftly counter-points with the warning that even though the prostitute's life was amended after a long life of sin, we must be careful not to interpret this *exemplum* as supporting a life of prolonged sin or an attitude of procrastination with regards to repentance:

But for all þis, latt vs begynne to amend vs be-tyme, for  
for to lie in synne longe, it is grett perill (p. 149: 27-  
29).

This counter-moralization does not, however, fit very well with the events depicted in the *exemplum*. As with the *Castle of Perserverance*-- where the salvation of the delinquent Mankynde just before death fails to support the "do-wel" message of the moralization-- the stress in sermon twenty-nine upon the danger of spiritual procrastination fits

only marginally with the *exemplum* which preceeds it. The narrator, apparently in order to rectify this discrepancy, makes an addition to the *exemplum* with the statement that the prostitute's salvation was helped considerably by her brother's fastings and prayers on her behalf:

For þis woman had helpe of hur broþur, and had fasted and  
prayed for hure (p. 149: 29-30).

However, while this addition to the narrative supports the narrator's attempt at making a convincing case for his counter-moralization, it detracts from the initial and primary didactic point which the *exemplum* is used to convey: "Behold now how *sone that a man may amend hym . . .*" (p. 149: 25). This seemingly corrective version of the *exemplum* makes it difficult to know whether the prostitute was saved because of her repentance and penance (as the narrator initially claims) or if her salvation rested ultimately upon the intercessory work of the hermit brother. No doubt the narrator would argue that both contributed to the prostitute's repentance and salvation, but such a position also limits the application of the *exemplum* to those members of the audience who would be fortunate enough to have someone praying and fasting on their behalf.

In his attempt to "move" his audience towards repentance, the narrator recognizes that an *exemplum* which gives hope to the despairing might also strengthen the presumption of those who persist in sin with the expectation of salvation. However, this attempt to pre-empt any wrong, ie. presumptuous, responses to the *exemplum* results in a general confusion over how, in fact, the circumstances which led up to the

prostitute's salvation could be applied universally. As a memory likeness, this *exemplum* has been used to "contain" two versions of the story and two, rather different, "points of view" or *intentio*. It is clear that the first version of the *exemplum* supports both the forensic and remedial functions of the sacrament of penance, furthermore the initial moralization effectively highlights those functions and demonstrates how "quickly" a great sinner may repent and amend his life. However, the force of the initial moralization is partly neutralized by the second or counter-moralization which suggests that repentance and amendment require the spiritual efforts of a second party.

### **Exempla of the Damned**

In the case of those *exempla* which depict the damnation of a sinner the problems associated with audience response have to do, not surprisingly, with the nature of the events leading up to the death of the protagonist. With one important exception (see the use of *exempla* in *Jacob's Well* below, p. 203) I did not find much evidence of preachers or narrators attempting to provide counter-moralizations to *exempla* which depicted damnation: apparently there was little concern that such stories would "move" the discouraged sinner further into spiritual despair or "wanhope." However, from the point of view of the technical explication of penance, the two narratives of lost sinners which I examine here both fail to provide an entirely convincing basis for the damnation of their protagonists.

In the Middle English compilation *Jacob's Well* we find that in the Chapter devoted to explaining the sentence of excommunication (*sentencie excommunicacionis*), two *exempla* are employed-- the first depicts the damnation of a great sinner, the other the salvation of one.<sup>23</sup> As a compilation *Jacob's Well* exhibits the unusual technique of placing *exempla* within the larger, primary structure of a schematic image. I would emphasize that although *exempla* are frequently employed within *Jacob's Well*, they are always incorporated within the primary "well" image as secondary narrative demonstrations of the didactic points described in terms of the building and function of the well.

*Jacob's Well* begins with a description of the "pytt or a welle that is depe wyth corrupt watyr."<sup>24</sup> The essential didactic message of the Chapter is to warn the reader that unless he repents of his sins he will incur the "curse" of damnation. The elaborate arrangement of various Biblical metaphors around the notion of "corrupt water" or "floods" illustrates the use of the *distinctio* in the compilation (see above p. 65). However, the *exempla*, although meant to support the tightly organized scheme of the "pit image", are not organically part of the extended image or its parts. For example, at the close of the main

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<sup>23</sup> *Jacob's Well* has been described as part of the "Peckham syllabus" tradition, the work has special value as an example of the "extended image", since the various syllabus topics integrated within the anatomized constituent parts of a well. Furthermore, in much the same way as the *Book of Vices and Virtues*, the description of the allegorized parts of the well shows how the sinner may progress-- through the "cleaning" of the well-- towards moral reform and salvation. For a discussion of its place within the tradition of Middle English religious instructional texts see W. Lister, "A Stylistic Analysis of *Jacob's Well*" (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southampton, 1986).

<sup>24</sup> *Jacob's Well*, edited by Arthur Brandeis, OS 115, E.E.T.S. (London, 1900), p. 5: 17-18.

didactic body of Chapter II we are told that "who-so deye unrepentaunt, schal haue a dredeful ende!", a statement that essentially corresponds with and summarizes the image of the pit filled with corrupt water (p. 9: 7-8). Essentially, this statement marks the end of the didactic exposition of the initial pit image, an image which, as the paradigmatic well image of Chapter I shows, portrays the state of man's soul prior to the building of a proper clear flowing, ie. "reformed", well. However, as a further exemplification of his didactic message the compiler adds two *exempla* which make clear to the audience the two alternatives facing sinful man. Although the two *exempla* are not part of the well or pit imagery, they are topically relevant as narratives which provide examples of others' responses to the didactic instruction contained in the well image.

We might expect, given that the topic considered in Chapter II of *Jacob's Well* is that of the "curse" or excommunication, that both the *exempla* would depict the damnation of unrepentant sinners. However, while the first-- as anticipated by the closing didactic statement which precedes it-- does tell of a lost sinner, the second, although concerned with a great sinner as well, provides the audience with an example of salvation. As compared with sermon twenty-nine of Ross's collection, this handling of *exempla* avoids the problem of trying to make a single *exemplum* "fit" two moralizations-- one for the presumptuous, the other for the despairing. Instead, the compiler of *Jacob's Well*-- even though his didactic message concerns the "dredeful ende" of those who remain in sin-- supplies his audience with an alternative or second narrative which, in terms of audience response, would prevent the discouraged sinner from responding to the first *exemplum* with despair.

The first *exemplum*, drawn we are told from the *Gesta Romanorum*, concerns the events leading up to the death of a certain wealthy and corrupt cleric. Having fallen ill, Ode (the clerk) sends his "man" to London to find a doctor, but on the way to London the servant, after losing his way, spends the night in a deserted house. That same night the clerk dies, and at midnight the servant witnesses a vision of his master being tortured by the Devil:

Exauple. I fynde in a tale de gestis anglorum þat þere was a clerk of gret astate, þat hyȝt Ode, but he was cursed in his werkys, noȝt dredyng þe censure of holy cherche. he lay syke, & sente his man to lundon for lechecraft. His man, be þe weye, wente wyll, & nyȝt com vp-on hym. he myȝte fynde non herberwe but in an old forlatyn cote. þus he lay in an herne. þat nyȝt his mayster deyid. At mydnyȝt, feendys comyn in-to þat cote ȝere þe man restyd . . . & in þe mydflore þey sett a brennyng chayre, in whiche here kyng as prince of feendys sate on hyȝe. A-forn hym was brouȝt forth . . . þe soule of Ode, mayster of þat man rest-ynge in þe herne of þat hows. þat man, seing þo feendys & þe soule of his mayster Ode in þe feendys hondys, was sore adred. þat soule of Ode, brouȝt in an yren leep all glowynge as fyir, cryed horribely for peyne (p. 9: 9-24).

The vision depicts the imposition of a series of punishments which correspond to the sins, or comforts, which the clerk habitually indulged in during his life. In the first round of punishments the clerk is bathed in boiling pitch as a due reward for his taste for "swete" baths:



þe kyng deuyþ sayde to hym: "Ode, þou hast lovyd wel ese & reste, tendyrnesse to lyn & to gon in softe & delycat beddyng & clothyng, & in swete bathys, & to slepe longe in bedde. þerfore þou schalt now tendyrly ben bathed & wasschyd!" þe feend dede hym be bathyd, & boyled, & sodyn, in pycche & oyle all sethyng ouer þe fyre (p. 9: 24-29).

In addition to his being "bathed" in boiling pitch the cleric is also roasted on a gridiron for his sleeping and jesting during church services, and made to drink molten metal for his gluttony.

There is a pervasive irony in this *exemplum* between the broader sense of "lechecraft" and the punishments which the demons inflict upon the cleric for his sins. The cleric, after falling ill, sends his servant to London "for lechecraft"-- that is, physical healing; however, from the penitential point of view the "lechecraft" which the cleric requires is that provided by a good confessor. In other words, given his life of brazen sinning and the fact of his illness, the cleric (like Mankynde in the *Castle of Perseverance*) can only hope to offer contrition at the moment of death. However, since the cleric dies without either a priest or, presumably, an attitude of contrition, the "lechecraft" applied to his person is that of the devils' tortures, punishments which, like penances, treat sins with corresponding punishments, but unlike penances, do not offer any remedy.

With reference to the topic of "excommunication", which it is meant to exemplify, the spectacle of the suffering cleric affords the compiler the opportunity of showing how an impenitent may incur the "curse" of

damnation. We have already been informed that the cleric died before the servant's vision of the tortures took place-- that is, the punishments were inflicted upon a man whose salvific destiny had already been decided. However, as the punishments proceed, the cleric's verbal responses suggest that perhaps his eternal destiny is not fully decided until he explicitly forsakes parents, the church, Christ, and the Virgin Mary:

panne seyde Ode: "Cursed by god in heuen, þat euere he made me, þat euere he browȝt me forth, that euere he bougte me wyth his blood, for to suffre this peyne! I curse hym, I forsake hym, I forsake al þe mede of his passioun & of his deth! I curse, & I forsake marie, his modyr! I curse, & I forsake alle þe seyntyngs! I curse, & I forsake, al þe helpe of prayerys & al þe helpe & mede of good werdyngs in heuen & in erthe!" (p. 10: 24-31).

We may well question the need for so thorough a rejection of all the agencies of mercy available to sinners, since the clerk's impenitent death would have sufficed to send him to Hell. However-- given the precedents of the Marian *exempla*-- the sinner could die without contrition and still be saved through the efforts of Mary or through the acts or even confession of a living relative. Such cases did not, of course, fall within the parameters set by penitential theory, but as "miracles" they obtained the quasi-legitimate status of "exceptions to the rule."<sup>25</sup> Although the compiler of *Jacob's Well* makes no provision

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<sup>25</sup> See *The Myracles of Oure Lady*, edited by Peter Whiteford (Heidelberg, 1990), 10-18 (p. 11): "Clearly, in the terms applied in praise of Mary, and the power attributed to her, the writers of these

in his book for these miraculous and exceptional cases, he does implicitly acknowledge their efficacy in his portrayal of the clerk's rejection not only of God and Christ, but also Mary, the saints, the "helpe of prayers", and the "gode werkys in heuen & in erthe."

Following this comprehensive rejection of all spiritual help, the "feend" turned to the clerk, embraced him and announced that now he had become one of the demons-- "oon of vs", whereupon the clerk was swallowed by the earth and cast into the pit of Hell:

In þise woordys [the rejection of all grace], he turnyd al  
 blak lyche þe feend. þanne þe mayster feend kyssed him, &  
 seyde: "Ode now art þou oure freend & oon of vs. þerfore,  
 þou schalt dwelle wyth vs, & be rewardyd for þi synne þat  
 þou hast don to vs, & for iangeling in goddys seruyse." þe  
 ground openyd, þe feendys prewe him down to þe pytt of  
 helle, þe erthe closyd agen (p. 11: 1-6).

While there is a suggestion that the clerk's rejection of all avenues of mercy is an inevitable result of his impenitent death, it is difficult to know-- had the clerk not explicitly rejected all help-- whether he might still have had a chance of being saved in some "miraculous" sense, i.e. through Mary or one of his living relatives. The compiler appears to have such "miraculous" cases in mind, since-- in his moralization of

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legends [Marian *exempla*] ran dangerously close to placing her above Christ as sole Redeemer . . . Theologians strove to keep her mediation distinct from and subordinate to that of Christ, but popular belief cheerfully blurred the distinction." Whiteford also draws attention to the role of the Virgin in saving sinners *in extremis* (at the point of death) who would, according to penitential theory, otherwise be damned (p. 17).

the tale-- he reiterates the sequence of events found in the tale and applies them to his reader. Again, we find that in the hypothetical case of the would-be impenitent, the failure to repent at death does not immediately entitle the demons to send the "lost" sinner to Hell. Instead, as in the case of "Ode", the dead impenitent is tortured until he explicitly rejects all agencies of mercy:

perfore, þou man & womman þat heryst þe woord of god wyth  
þin erys, be ware of þe peryle of þi synne . . . for ȝif þou  
dredyst hem noȝt, ne wylt noȝt lefe hem, but dyest wyth-oute  
repentauns, þou schalt be bathyd, as Ode was, in brennyng  
pych & oyle! . . . and as a woodman in a frenesy forsakyth &  
dyspyseth his god, so þou, for peyne, schalt in malyce  
forsake þi baptem, þi fadyr, þi modyr, & al holy cherch,  
wyth alle here sacramentys! Þou schalt forsake þi god, oure  
lady, & alle seyntes! þou schalt be lyche þe feend! þou  
schalt be drenchyd in þe pytt of helle, as þe cursyd man Ode  
was, ȝif þou be gylte in þe grete curs, & deye wyth-oute  
repentaunce! (p. 11: 9-21).

This interim period between an unrepentant death and damnation does not, as far as I know, refer to any theoretical basis in either penitential theory or medieval theology in general. However, in the "miraculous" Marian *exempla*, the impenitent sinner who had shown, in his lifetime, a certain loyalty towards Mary could be rescued from Hell despite a lack of the necessary death-bed repentance, a possibility which suggests that there was-- at least in terms of popular religion-- what might be termed

an unorthodox "probationary" time period distinct from purgatory which allowed for miraculous rescues of "lost" souls from Hell.<sup>26</sup>

In sermon twenty-eight of Ross's collection an *exemplum* is used to demonstrate the didactic message that "he that shryveth hym and that hath no hope of forgeuenes, it avayles hym not" (p. 144: 5-6). The narrative concerns a particularly wicked "knyghte" who, although occupying an important position close to the king, refused to acknowledge either God or the church. His one loyalty and potentially redeeming quality was his devotion and willingness to please the king. Thus, when the king himself reproved the knight, advising him to amend his life in case death were to come to him unexpectedly, the knight agreed that when he saw death approach he would amend:

He toke no hede of God ne of holychurche ne of man, but  
oonly pat he myght please pe kyng. 3itt he displysed for is  
wicked comersacion and rewell, so pat pe kyng reproved hym  
and counseld hym to leue is falsehod and to shryve hym and  
to amend hym pat dethe soþenly take hym not. And he seid he  
wold, when pat he see is tyme (p. 144: 13-19).

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<sup>26</sup> As an interesting variation of this *exemplum* see tale 587 in the *Alphabet of Tales* (p. 390). Here the narrative concerns a dead monk who, while his fellow monks prayed for him, suddenly came back to life, vigorously denied God, spat at the crucifix, and nearly tore down the image of Mary exclaiming that as he was already lost and in Hell their prayers were ineffectual. However, the monks continued to pray for him so that at length the monk came "agayn to hym selfe" and proceeded to confess his sins, do penance and then to pass "vnto God". As a "miraculous" tale this account works as an exception to the "rule", however, as with the clerk in *Jacob's Well*, it suggests that such exceptional cases made it difficult for the compiler or preacher to ensure that reader response to doctrinal penance would not be distorted by such "miracles".

After this encounter with the king the knight fell ill. Again the king visited repeatedly, encouraging him to repent of his sins. This time the knight promised to repent once he has regained his health, since in his view to confess just before death would suggest cowardice:

Anon aftur, he fell seke and lay longe sorowyng in ys bedd.  
 he kynge com to hym and visited hym often, and bad hym  
 shryue hym of is synnes and to repente hym. And he seid pat  
 he wold do so when pat he were hole, and he takynge þan to  
 God, and seid pat he wold neuer be somuche a coward to  
 amende hym in is sekenes for no drede of dethe (p. 144: 20-  
 26).

Finally, during one of his visits the king learns that the knight has given up the idea of repenting and amending his life. The reason, as the knight explains, has to do with a vision which came to him at mid-day. In this vision he was shown two books: the first, a rather small volume carried by two angelic beings, contained the knight's good deeds, the second book-- carried by two "blake and horrible persons"-- was extremely large and contained the knight's sins:

And he answerd and seid pat it was to late to amend hym.  
 "For ryght now," quod he, "at þe tyme of þe mydday þer com  
 to me to fayre songe men, þat were passynge faire and  
 bright. And whan pat I sawe hem, me þought pat I was all  
 hole. And þei leid beforne me a faire boke for to rede, but  
 it was vondir litill; and þer I founde all þe good dedis  
 that euer I dud, and þouthes, but certeyn þei were full few



and litill. þan anon sopenly and anon þer com to me too  
 blake and horrible persons of sight, and to see hem I was  
 grettely aferd . . . And þei sett hem a-downe and toke  
 forthe a grett boke þat was full blake and horribull, and  
 þer, wold I nold I, þer I rede all myn euyll dedis and all  
 ill þouthes . . . (pp. 144,145: 29 and 1-6).

In addition to showing the knight his sins, the demons apply psychological pressure in their expressed view that the knight is as good as damned. Finally, in a scene reminiscent of the clerk's tortures in *Jacob's Well*, the demons stab the knight in the head and feet with heated knives. As the knight explains to the king, when these two knives come together the knight will die. The cumulative effect of these essentially psychological tortures draws the knight into spiritual despair:

And þer com anopur and seid, "Whi sitt ȝe here? ȝe wote  
 well þat he is hours." And þei seid, ."ȝe" "þan take hym  
 with you," quod he, "vn-to þe pyne of hell withowten ende."  
 þan þese ij foule fendes toke ij knyves of yren all  
 brennynge, and þe on smote me vn þe hede and þe opur on þe  
 fete, and þise ewels ben comon now in-to my body. And whan  
 þei com to-ȝepure, þan I wote well þat that I shall die and  
 goy to hell. Where-to þan shuld I repente me þat shall so  
 sone die? For and i shuld liff neuer so longe, I myght  
 neuer amend me. My synnes ben so grett and so foule þat I  
 may neuer haue forȝeuenes of hem (p. 145: 7-19).

Eventually the knight did die, and we are told he went to Hell as he had expected. As with the *exemplum* of the lost clerk in *Jacob's Well*, this narrative of the lost knight applies specifically to those persons in the "audience" who, like the knight, have presumed to put off repentance until just prior to death. However, unlike the story of the lost clerk, this *exemplum* is not counter-pointed with a second narrative showing a great sinner being saved. Thus, alone, the *exemplum* of the lost knight would potentially "move" the despairing members of the audience further towards "wanhope", a possibility which the narrator attempts to preclude in his moralization.

The narrator identifies first the "wanhope" of the knight, noting that if he had cried for mercy and had had a firm belief in God's power to forgive he could have been saved. According to the narrator, the vision of the "faire boke" containing the good deeds should have inspired the knight to hope for mercy:

He shuld not a failed of mercy, for all pat he ley in poynte  
of dethe. And perfore he shewed hym is good dedis written,  
þoo al þei were fewe, for pat he shuld not haue dowed hym  
of þe mercy of God (p. 145: 25-29).

However, while the book of good deeds *should* have "moved" the knight to repentance, it is difficult to ignore the obvious imbalance in the vision between the forces of good and evil. The knight refers to the positive experience of feeling "hole" after seeing the two angelic beings who bring to him the small book of his good deeds. This moment is eclipsed, however, by the more powerful imagery of the demons, whose

freedom psychologically to torture the victim makes it difficult to see-- at least in emotional terms-- how the knight could have still hoped for salvation. The struggle for the soul of man, often depicted in the illustrations of "the dance of death", showed demons attempting to carry souls to Hell, but the knight's vision of the demons would appear to have closer connections with the activities of demons in the world of the living. The *Alphabet of Tales* contains numerous instances of demons harrassing the living in the attempt to drive them away from good deeds.<sup>27</sup> Demonic interference within the "normal" penitential process does not, of course, find treatment within penitential theory. In both the *exempla* of the damned considered in this Chapter, the access of demons to the sinner significantly influences, if not determines, the decision to forsake grace and mercy. As stories these demonstrations of penitential doctrine correctly convey the fundamental need for contrition prior to death, but in the "telling" this central didactic point becomes less intelligible as the striking and "moving" scenes of the demons imbue the stories with an "excess" of the "miraculous" and latent folk-lore.

### **Exempla Without Endings**

In the final two examples of penitential *exempla* we find a straightforward and effective implementation of Thomas Waleys' homiletical rule, *Auditorum etiam condiciones ponderande sunt, et juxta*

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<sup>27</sup> See for example narratives 590 and 591 in the *Alphabet of Tales*, p. 392.

*has proferendus et sermo* (the conditions of the hearers are to be carefully pondered, and in accord with these the sermon is to be set forth).<sup>28</sup> Rather than attempting to guide reader response (*intentio*) through the use of a moralization which ensures that the *exemplum* "fits" both the potentially despairing and presumptuous, these *exempla* by avoiding an "ending" effectively make certain that whatever the "condition" or *status* of the individual member of the audience, the *exemplum* will produce the *intentio* of the "state of dread."

In *Handlyng Synne* Mannyng provides an example of the non-conclusive *exemplum* which, as we have discussed, would have ensured that the audience's attention remained fixed upon their own, and also unresolved, penitential lives (see above p. 21). The *exemplum* is employed to illustrate Mannyng's didactic commentary upon the fifth commandment *pou* shalt no man sle" and is drawn, as Mannyng tells us, from Gregory's "Dyalogus":

Y shal ȝow telle for swyche dome  
 A tale þat sumtyme fyl yn rome.  
 Of holy wryt þe englyssh y toke;  
 "Dyalogus" men clepe þe boke.  
 þys tale per yn ys wrete redy  
 And fyl yn þe tyme of seynt gregory (pp. 36-37: 1363-1368).

The *exemplum*, in approximately one-hundred lines of rhyming couplets, tells of a knight who, after being hit by an arrow in battle, has a

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<sup>28</sup> See G.R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: c. 1350-1450* (Cambridge, 1926), p. 331.

vision in which he stands at the foot of a bridge which crosses over hell and into heaven:

þe knyght ful sore syke gan lye  
 And was yn poynt as he shulde dye.  
 Hys spyryt was take to see a cas  
 Ryght as goddys wyl was (p. 37: 1375-1378).

In the course of the vision, the knight watches as three different men approach the bridge and attempt to cross it. The first, a priest, goes over the bridge into heaven without any difficulty for "he hadde leuyd yn hys lyff clene" (p. 38: 1439).

The second figure that the knight observes attempting to cross the bridge "dede euere wrong" and consequently falls into the river or hell (p. 38: 1442). The third man to try a crossing begins to slip into the river, but as the devils grab his ankles and start to pull him into hell, he manages to cling precariously to the bridge:

ȝyt of a nouper Y hadde a syghte:  
 Steuene, for soþe, hys name hyght.  
 þat yche steuene was wnt to be  
 Wonyng yn rome, þys cyte.  
 As he wldē passe þe bregge betydde,  
 Hys fete begunne to slyde besyde  
 And was yn poynt for to falle  
 Yn to þat watyr byttrer þan galle.  
 þe fendys wende weyl hym to fonge,

But by þe bregge þan gan he honge (p. 39: 1463-1472).

The vision of a sinner drawn between heaven and hell depicts graphically the tension or "state of dread" which should be the experience of the majority of penitents. In the case of "Steven", however, this tension is partly resolved as a group of men come to his rescue and pull him back unto the bridge, an action which the knight attributes to Steven's "gode dedes":

Feyr men come pedyr, but Y noot how,  
 And by hys armys vp hym drow.  
 þey wlde nat suffre hym falle al down  
 Yn to þat gret confusyown.  
 He plesyd god wyþ sum gode dede,  
 þarfore þey hylpe hym yn hys nede (p. 39: 1475-1480).

This rescue action is described figuratively as "almasdede" or works of satisfaction, the sin which caused him to nearly fall off the bridge was lechery:

Almasdede men vndyrstonde  
 By þe drawyng vp of hys honde.  
 Y trowe he trespaste yn lechery,  
 þat þey þe thes drowe hym by (p. 39: 1481-1484).

It is clear that if it were not for the "good deeds" or works of satisfaction which Steven had performed in his life, the sin of lechery would have caused him to fall into hell. But while we might expect a



clear resolution of the tale in terms of Steven's ultimate salvation--no such conclusion is provided. Instead, in what I would view as a clearly rhetorical evasion, Mannyng admits that he cannot tell what eventually happened to Steven, "But for soþe can y nat telle/ Whether he shulde to heuene or helle" (39: 1485-1486).

Mannyng's non-conclusive *exemplum* demonstrates the use of a relatively straightforward and effective rhetorical technique. The "middle group" of audience members represented by the third character, "Steven", is bracketed in Mannyng's *exemplum* by the priest who is granted immediate access to heaven, and the confirmed sinner who is sent tumbling into the river and thence to hell. The "middle group", standing as it were betwixt heaven and hell, could be viewed as representing the position of the majority of penitents.

In *Piers* Langland employs a similar rhetorical technique in his brief *exemplum* of "Roberd the Robbere." As part of the general confession scene of Passus V, Roberd stands out as one of the few literal characters. He is introduced by Langland as an example of an individual who, fearing that he will not be able to make restitution for his thieving, comes dangerously close to succumbing to despair:

Roberd the Robbere on Reddite loked,  
And for ther was noght wher[with], he wepte swithe sore (V:  
462-463).

Again, as with Mannyng's *exemplum*, we may view Roberd as a type of the sinner caught "in the middle" between the values of good and evil deeds.

The struggle which Roberd faces, and the struggle which Langland presents to his reader, lies in the choice between two exemplary figures. Near despair, Roberd is potentially a "Judas figure", since Judas was considered to be both an exemplar of the sin of "wanhope" and, in his betrayal of Christ for the thirty pieces of silver, also a figure of covetousness-- the sin of robbers.<sup>29</sup> However, in addition to the negative *exemplum* of Judas, stood the positive exemplar of "Dysmas", the "thief on the cross", and it is to this figure that Roberd turns as he recalls that although Dysmas was unable to make restitution, he was promised eternal life by Christ:

And yet the synfulle sherewe seide to hymselfe:  
 Crist, that on Calvarie upon the cros deidest,  
 Tho Dysmas my brother bisoughte thee of grace,  
 And haddest mercy on that man for *Memento* sake;  
 So rewe on this Roberd that *Reddere* ne have,  
 Ne nevere wene to wynne with craft that I knowe;  
 But for thi muchel mercy mitigacion I biseche:  
 Dampne me noght at Domesday for that I did so ille! (V: 464-471).

The spiritually positive recollection of the significance of the example of Dysmas enables Roberd to resist the temptation to fall into "wanhope", and thus to avoid embracing the example of the despairing Judas. However, Langland is careful to avoid suggesting that this action on the part of Roberd led easily to his ultimate salvation.

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<sup>29</sup> See *Handlyng Synne*, edited by Idelle Sullens, p. 307: 12337-12338: "An holy man pys same spelle./ Dat of Iudas wanhope telle."

Instead-- in a manner typical also of Mannyng-- Langland confesses that he cannot "properly" show what eventually happened to Roberd, a remark which, I believe, can be taken to refer to the rhetorically problematic nature of conclusive penitential *exempla*:

What bifel of this feloun I kan noght faire shewe.  
 Wel I woot he wepte faste water with hise eighen,  
 And knowliched his [coupe] to Crist eftsoones,  
 That *Penitencia* his pik he sholde polshe newe  
 And lepe with hym over lond al his lif tyme,  
 For he hadde leyen by *Latro*, Luceferis Aunte (V: 472-477).

Although Langland cannot "faire shewe" Roberd's salvific fate, he "woot wel" that he showed contrition and confessed his sin. By avoiding a conclusive ending Langland can ensure that the one thing which his audience will "woot wel" is that they must be contrite, confess their sins, and as Langland emphasizes with reference to Roberd, spend their entire lives on pilgrimage with the "pik" of "*Penitencia*."

Of the various strategies for the placement of the moralization with relation to the *exemplum*, the choice to avoid providing a conclusive ending perhaps best guides the audience to remember the narrative with a doctrinally correct *intentio*. In general if we compare the use of the *exemplum* with the use of schematic image in the teaching of penance, it would appear that while the former is perhaps more "moving", its use may require the compiler to use a moralization to channel reader response away from the potential misinterpretations which narratives often generate.

## CHAPTER VI

### Conclusion

In this thesis I have aimed, in general, to draw attention to the "literary forms" employed by the "second wave" vernacular compilers in their expression of penance (pp. 1-5). More specifically, I have suggested that when comparing the "second wave" texts with their Latin "first wave" progenitors, the two primary distinguishing aspects of the "second wave" vernacular compilations are the use of the figural *res* as a structuring schematic image, and the use of the penitential *exemplum* as a narrative demonstration of penance (p. 7). The representational modes of the figural *res* and the *exemplum* are, in turn, assessed for their rhetorical function as valorized within the late medieval traditions of *ars predicandi*, *ars memorandi*, and "ethical reading" in general (pp. 54-86, 160-178). The expression of penance via the rhetorical figural *res* or *exemplum* is then considered with reference to the penitential theory of the "first wave" Latin manuals.

Chapter I set out the penitential theory of the Latin penitential manuals as an essential point of reference for the consideration of penance as represented within the "second wave" vernacular compilations. We saw that a number of sticking points within the penitential theory of the late medieval period surface again as concerns specific to the pedagogical aims of the vernacular compilations.

One of the most central of these theoretical issues considered was that posed by the emotional opposites of spiritual despair or "wanhope" and spiritual presumption. Both were considered as dangerous bars to the appropriation of the sacrament of penance and divine forgiveness. Consequently, although the formal statement of absolution as taught by the Latin manuals (*ego absolvo te*) ostensibly signified the complete forgiveness of sins, there were currents within late medieval theology ("nominalism") which claimed that a penitent could never be certain of forgiveness, since he could never be certain that he has been completely contrite (p. 13, note 24). As we saw, the penitential manuals offer rather more certainty than did the nominalist theologians, but in the practical context of the sermon or the confessional this issue of how to pre-empt either the responses of despair or presumption raised again the issue of salvific certainty. To know that one was saved-- *ego absolvo te*-- could lead to an attitude of presumption in regards to sin, however, at the same time it could also prove an important antidote to the attitude of despair (pp. 14-22).

A further sticking point which was discussed as part of penitential theory concerned the potentially disparate forensic and remedial functions of the third element of the sacrament, works of satisfaction. Within the forensic context contrition removed the "eternal debt of sin" and satisfaction removed the "temporal debt of sin". However, since absolution-- the remission of the eternal debt of sin-- was extended to the penitent prior to his actually doing his assigned penances, it was not binding that the penitent do his penances-- especially in view of the easy availability in the late medieval period of indulgences (pp. 27-28, 145, note 49). But works of satisfaction also had an important

remedial function within the sacrament as disciplines which removed the penitent from the "occasions" of sin and thereby assisted him in the moral reform of his life (pp. 27-29). When confronted with the potential "inconsistency" or tension between the forensic and remedial functions of satisfaction, the vernacular compiler could-- in tandem with the Latin manuals-- stress the remedial function, but this would not in itself deny the audience the purchase of indulgences. This, combined with the delicate problem of the "time of absolution", made it imperative that the vernacular compiler so represent penance as to reinforce its remedial function without denying its forensic function, or contradicting the Latin manuals with regards to the time of absolution (pp. 31-32, 35).

With Chapter III it was argued that the figural *res* functions as a vital tool in the re-shaping of traditional penitential theory so that it meets the demands of the "real" audience: its emotional diversity and its need for ethical reform (p. 36). The function of the figural *res* was explored both in terms of its use within Scripture and in its rhetorical role as a mnemonic "likeness" (pp. 38-48, 49-77). As for Scripture, the figural *res*-- as defined by Augustine-- was described as having the necessary function of making "visible" what to fallen man were the "invisible" truths of the divine or transcendental (pp. 37-39). When interpreted by medieval exegetes, the figural *res* worked not only as a "means" to the "end" of divine knowledge, it also brought into harmony-- through its three "spiritual senses"-- the often contradictory and even "absurd" features of the "literal/historical sense" of Scripture (pp. 44-48).



The rhetorical function of the figural *res* was seen as stemming both from the thirteenth-century recognition of Scripture's "multiform mode" or *multiplex modus* and from the emphasis in the tradition of the *ars praedicandi* upon the rhetorical function of those modes for preaching to diverse types of audiences. In choosing a particular "mode" of discourse which would answer to the needs of his perceived audience, the preacher observes the principle of rhetorical *decorum* (what Alexander of Hales termed "matching the mode to meet the objective" pp. 50-54). The literal sense of Scripture was valorized by figures such as Alexander of Hales, Robert Grosseteste, and others for its power to "move" the emotions or *affectus* of the various members of an audience towards piety and virtue (p. 54). Just as the literal sense was more fully appreciated for its rhetorical force, so the function of the figural *res* was valorized for its impact upon the *affectus*, the consequent "imprint" upon the memory of the "likenesses" of the *res*, and finally for the doctrine and emotional "responses" which those "likenesses" contain (p. 55-56).

It was observed that the full employment of rhetorical *decorum* presumes a "copiousness" of meanings, definitions, quotations, and examples for any given "truth" or *res*. This rhetorical "copiousness" allows the preacher or compiler to choose from an "inventory" or *collectio* of meanings, so that whatever the occasion or the perceived audience-- the mode of discourse would match the objective (p. 65). This need was met with the development in the twelfth-century of the *distinctiones* which essentially provided the preacher or compiler with a list of meanings for each figural *res* (pp. 65-67). The "third type" of *distinctio*, as identified by J.B. Allen, was seen as suggesting an

important redeployment of the figural *res* as a schematic or anatomized image which would facilitate the memorization of doctrine (pp. 68-75). It was stressed that the schematic image (schematic figural *res*) proved popular to vernacular compilers for its utility as a mnemonic device which could be employed both as a structuring schematic image for the *ordinatio* of an entire book and as an organic image which, because of its causally related parts, would also integrate proximate doctrinal elements or groups with penance (pp. 70-71). Furthermore, the structuring schematic image, when memorized by the reader, would serve as a "mental storehouse" or *inventory* of meanings from which the reader could draw for his private use. This "internalization" of the schematic image was viewed as marking the transfer of rhetorical "copiousness" from the material book or *distinctio* to the material of the reader's brain, a process which, if undertaken, would provide the reader with a "plurality" of ethical truths and "experiences" from which to choose in his making of ethical judgements (pp. 73, note 62, 77). Thus, the use of the figural *res* as a structuring schematic image would effect, through the memorization of the image and its constituent parts, a bridge between "reading" or "hearing" and ethical action or "doing well". The trained memory or *habitus* would supply, in its compendium of memory images or likenesses, the "copiousness" of affective experience necessary to the action of "reason" in adapting the individual to "match" the objective or "end" of righteousness (pp. 85-86).

With Chapter IV the deployment of the structuring schematic image within vernacular "second wave" compilations was assessed in terms of its effect upon the transmission of the sacrament of penance. In the *Book of Vices and Virtues* the two "central" or "paradigmatic" images--

the beast image and the garden image-- were described as "compositional sites" or "meditational artifacts", schematic images which serve as "blue-prints" or "mnemonic prompts" for the main text which follows (pp. 91-93, 99-100). It was stressed that the central images do not "contain" the entire substance of the main text to which they refer. Instead, they work as striking memory images which, because they are easily recollected, provide the reader with a "meditational artifact" which he can use as a mnemonic foundation upon which to build the more elaborate memory structure of the entire commentative text (p. 99).

In terms of its effect upon the expression of penance, the central or paradigmatic garden image employed in the *Vices and Virtues* makes possible a closer integration between the sacrament of penance and other proximate doctrinal elements such as the *Pater noster*, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the seven remedial virtues (p. 106). Apart from the pictorial integration afforded by the central garden image, the causal relations between the various parts of the image depict a cause and effect integration between the various doctrinal groups treated in the main text (p. 107, 110-111, 113-114). With regard to the sacrament of penance, the causal *ordinatio* of the central garden image provides the compiler with an opportunity to depict penance as an extension of the virtue of "prowesse" or fortitude. As an "active" or "militant" virtue, "prowesse" figures as the quality necessary to the defeat of the seven deadly sins. In placing penance under this virtue, the compiler makes explicit the role of penance as the dynamic "mechanism" whereby the vices are to be displaced by the seven remedial virtues-- through the use of the structuring schematic image, penance is clearly identified as the activity necessary to the reformation of the life (p.

120-121). The value of this imagistic and causal *ordinatio* is in its depiction of penance as-- in real terms-- as the "first step" towards the moral reformation of the life. Moreover, because of the causal relations between the constituent parts of the schematic garden image, the practice of penance is fully integrated with the supplicatory function of the *Pater noster*, the "grace" of the seven gifts, and the seven remedial virtues (p. 122-123).

The sophisticated handling of traditional doctrinal and exegetical materials displayed in the *Vices and Virtues* was then contrasted with the comparatively unskilled structuring of Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*. I argued that Chaucer's failure to show how penance relates causally with the seven remedial virtues results largely from the relative lack of structuring schematic imagery in the tale. I also drew attention to Chaucer's failure to emphasize the remedial function of satisfaction, an omission on his part which suggests a failure fully to appreciate the ethical thrust of the Latin penitential manuals, and which, in view of his extended treatment of the seven deadly sins and remedial virtues, suggests a rather shaky conceptual grasp of the sacrament of penance in general (pp. 122-123).

The utility of the schematic image was further demonstrated in the case of the "castle image" in Passus V of *Piers Plowman*. Here the "spatial" *ordinatio* of the castle image was described as having been incorporated *within* the "causal" *ordinatio* of the "journey to Truth". The effect of this combination of *ordinationes* is to make possible a causal integration of proximate doctrinal concepts (pp. 134-138). Langland's exploitation of the schematic castle image also allows him to

target two distinct groups within his audience without sacrificing the ethical emphasis that all penitents must aim to reform their lives (pp. 147-155, 157-159).

With Chapter V I considered the penitential *exemplum* as a mode of representation which, although it may prove a powerful "mover" of the *affectus*, also allows for a certain "distance" between the narration and its didactic moralization. This, I argued, would allow for an initially subjective emotional response on the part of the audience that, rather than necessarily reflecting the didactic aims of the compiler, would often merely reflect on the sinful disposition (*status*) of the audience member (p. 175). It was showed how in the case of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Lydgate's *Daunce of Machabree* the explicit moralization was used to "re-direct" the reader's or listener's *affectus* so that he could "recollect" the *exemplum* with a morally correct *intentio* or "point of view" (pp. 167-176). This "re-direction" or "re-channeling" of the reader's *affectus* is, it was suggested, commonly observed in most penitential *exempla* where the emotional opposites of "wanhope" and presumption challenge the compiler to moralize his *exempla* in ways which effectively meet the needs of both groups.

In examining various penitential *exempla* four different rhetorical techniques for the placement of the didactic moralization were identified. The first, found in the *Confessio Amantis*, makes the moralization of the various *exempla* related in the book part of the "larger" or "containing" narrative of *Amans'* confession. This method "shrinks" the distance between the narrative and the didactic moralization by incorporating the moralization within the story of

*Amans'* escape from *cupiditas* (pp. 176-177). The second technique is that of providing two moralizations for a single *exemplum*. This method attempts to ensure in the case of a saved protagonist, as recounted in the *Castle of Perseverance*, that those in the audience who are susceptible to presumption will not use the narrative as the basis for continued sinning. However, in offering the audience two potentially contradictory interpretations of a single *exemplum*, the narrator makes it difficult for readers to decide which moralization or even version of the tale to appropriate (pp. 193-195, 199-201). The third technique for ensuring that an *exemplum* elicits a correct *intentio* is found in *Jacob's Well* where the story of a lost sinner is counter-pointed with a second *exemplum* of a saved sinner (pp. 202-204). The fourth method, as with the second and the third, also attempts to ensure that the *exemplum* correctly "re-directs" *affectus* of both the presumptuous and the despairing. This is achieved by not providing a conclusive ending to the *exemplum*, that is-- instead of showing the protagonist as saved or lost, we are not informed of his ultimate salvific fate (pp. 214-220).

Having considered both the impact of the schematic image and the *exemplum* upon the transmission and reception of penitential theory, I would conclude by emphasizing that the representation of penance in the "second wave" texts depends to a large degree upon the rhetorical and mnemonic powers of the image and the story for the effecting of moral reform. "Second wave" expressions of penance were, it seems, aimed at providing readers or listeners not only with doctrine-- the "informational" content of the Latin manuals-- but with doctrine packaged in ways calculated to "imprint" truth upon the mind and character of the would-be penitent, to effect better moral behaviour,



and to maintain a proper attitude to penance. The figural and narrative modes may be viewed then as the vital "bridge" between the knowledge of penitential doctrine and its realization within the life of the individual Christian. As the compiler of the *Vices and Virtues* observes, "it were litel worp for a man or a womman to kunne good, but he dide good", a pedagogical aim that depends considerably upon the structuring schematic garden image and the *exemplum*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Vices and Virtues*, p. 92: 29-30.

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